Commentary

VOLUME NINETY • NUMBER SIX • DECEMBER 1990

Socialism: Guilty As Charged

David Horowitz

How They Teach the Holocaust

Lucy S. Dawidowicz

Who Lost Hong Kong?

Ross H. Munro

The Great Hack Genius

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Where the New Music Went Wrong

Samuel Lipman

Why College Sports

D. G. Myers

Books in Review:

Scott McConnell / Angelo M. Codevilla / Joseph Adelson / Michael Novak

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE / $3.75

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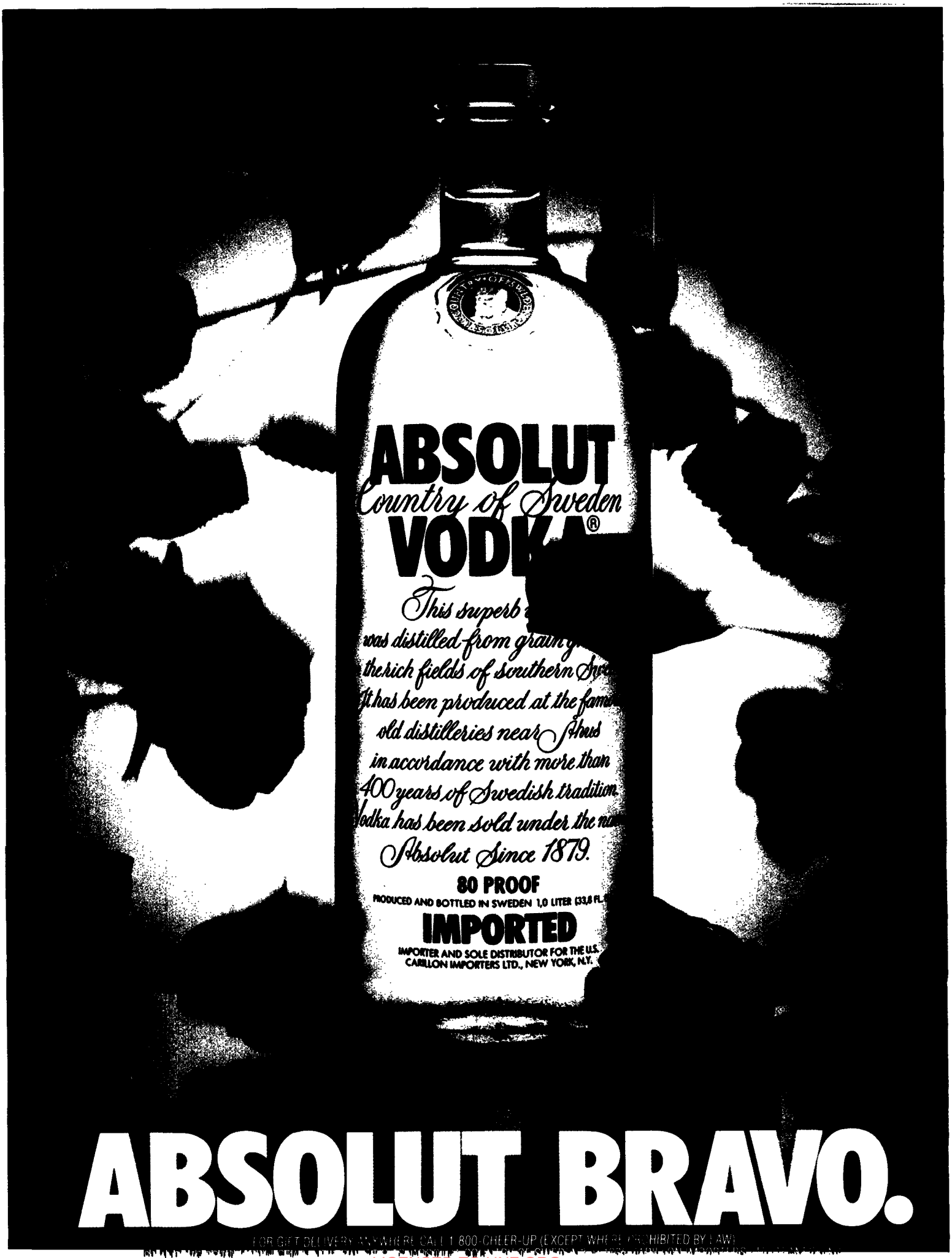
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COMMENTARY (ISSN 0010-2601) is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—Single copy is $3.75, $39 a year; 2 years $72, 3 years $105—Add $8.00 per year for all foreign subscriptions, including Canada and Latin America—Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to COMMENTARY, 165 East 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.
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EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022
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Letters from Readers

Crime But No Punishment

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read with great admiration and also growing anger Marco Carynnyk's "The Killing Fields of Kiev" [October]. My anger was not directed at the author of the article. He is to be highly commended for a powerful piece about a dreadful atrocity. We are in debt to him for reminding all of us what Stalinism and Communism were all about.

My anger is due to a simple but glaring fact: to this day, though we have been saturated with revelation after revelation of the monumental scale of Stalinist crimes, literally not one, not even one Stalinist murderer has been punished for Stalinist crimes anywhere by anyone! Lest there be any confusion, Lavrenti Beria, head of the secret police (NKVD) under Stalin, was shot in 1953 not because he was a Stalinist criminal but because he threatened the power of his Stalinist accomplices.

Hitler's crimes are still being justly punished. But in the Soviet Union there are literally thousands of ex-killers and ex-torturers living on official pensions, attending various revolutionary celebrations decked out in their medals, and perhaps even reminiscing about their struggle against "the enemies of the people."

Recently, several direct participants in the mass murder of the defenseless Polish officers in Katyn and elsewhere—15,000 of them shot one by one in the back of the head—have been identified. If Gorbachev has totally broken with Stalinism, why has not a single one of them been put on trial? The Eichmann of the operation, a former NKVD major by the name of Serepenko who was in charge of the "logistics" of the operation, lives comfortably in Moscow.

The anti-Jewish purges and related murders occurred in the late 1940's and early 1950's. Any participating major or captain in the KGB (the successor to the NKVD) would be today in his sixties. The Soviets are still shooting people for having allegedly collaborated with the Nazis more than 45 years ago. Why have no KGB-NKVD veterans been arrested and put on trial for Stalinist crimes? Kardanovich, who orchestrated mass murders in the Ukraine and was implicated in the Jewish purges, is a pensioner in an apartment near the Kremlin.

Last year, a Soviet chronicler of Stalinist crimes, Yuri Druzhnikov, published an interview with a former NKVD executioner, by the name of Kartashov. Kartashov reminisces that he personally (not counting "mass actions") shot 37 people. He was proud of the fact that he devised a method of execution that was relatively soundless: "I order that the mouth be opened, and I shoot from immediate proximity. I am splashed only by warm blood, like cologne water, and there is no sound. I know this work—killing. If not for the attacks [of epilepsy], I would not have had to be retired so soon." If Kartashov were an SS man, would there not be an outcry, demanding that he be tried?

All of that raises the wider question of responsibility. The Nuremberg tribunal judged the Gestapo and the SS to have been criminal organizations. Is it not time to demand that the NKVD-KGB, and perhaps the Communist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) itself, be declared by the emerging democratic assemblies in the Soviet Union, with the concurrence of democratic public opinion worldwide, to have been criminal organizations?

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI
Washington, D. C.

MARCO CARYNNYK writes:

I am grateful to Zbigniew Brzezinski for supporting so vigorously the point I wanted to make: the NKVD murdered God knows how many hundreds of thousands of people—every city and town in the country has its own mass graves—but no one has been held accountable. And yet I am more pessimistic than Mr. Brzezinski about the possibility of bringing the killers to trial, let alone labeling the NKVD-KGB and CPSU criminal organizations. Despite the party's diminished authority and the KGB's kinder and friendlier face, the bureaucracy is putting up enormous resistance to revelations about its crimes.

One example: last February a small black stone dedicated to "the victims of Stalinist terror" was unveiled on the grounds of the October Palace of Culture in Kiev. In the 1930's the NKVD had its headquarters here, and many of the peo-

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ple who were buried at Bykivnia were shot in the cellars below the halls where children now practice their ballet steps and music-lovers listen to Mozart. Then in August the stone disappeared. Even this modest reminder of what had happened offended someone in the party or the security forces who understood that keeping the Bykivnias of the country hushed up is a matter of privilege, power, and prestige.

Given the decline of the party and the rise of the democratic opposition, this resistance to the rule of law may well be overcome. More difficult to understand is the failure of the democrats, who have invested so much energy in revealing the crimes of the 1930's and 1940's, to demand prosecution. The most articulate and outspoken members of the society, the artists, writers, and journalists who have made the organization Memorial into a mass movement and have been revealing one mass grave after another, limit themselves to such symbolic gestures as proposing that monuments be erected and that Stalin's accomplice Lazar Kaganovich be brought to Bykivnia. Even Mykola Lysenko, who was instrumental in exposing Bykivnia, seems to be of two minds about prosecution. He complained to a magazine writer recently that there had been no Nuremberg tribunal in the Soviet Union and pointed out that the few dozen NKVD-KGB officials who were tried were not prosecuted as mass murderers. But when I queried him in September, he argued that too many people had been involved in the killings for trials to be possible. What he wants most, he told me, is a memorial complex with a library, archives, and a chapel at Bykivnia.

Is this refusal to think juridically, this willingness to be satisfied with symbols, a legacy of Stalin no less than the skulls beneath the pine trees? Has the party infiltrated the democratic movement so thoroughly that it can bend it to its will? Do the democrats not know how to make real demands because they have not been allowed, until very recently, to participate in politics? Are people afraid to bring mass murderers to trial because they sense their own complicity in the erection and maintenance of the Stalinist system? "Where are you now, you hangmen of my people?" Vasyl Symonenko asked. Another poet—Maksym Rylsky—answered him: "They walk about among us, and we still offer them our hand."

So persuading the democrats in the Soviet Union to get the murderers among them into the courtroom and to label the NKVD-KGB and the CPSU criminal organizations will be difficult. And yet with support as thoughtful and forceful as Zbigniew Brzezinski's, perhaps it can be done.

Black Professors

To the Editor of Commentary:

In her article, "On the Scarcity of Black Professors" [July], Abigail M. Thernstrom seriously misstates Wellesley College's policy on increasing the representation of faculty of color. She states that Wellesley is "considering a *requirement* that each department hire a minority group member *when it next makes an appointment* [emphasis added]." In fact, the faculty of Wellesley College has voted that each department will *have as its goal* the hiring of at least one minority person *among its next three* regular faculty appointments.

There is, of course, a fundamental difference in these two approaches. Our policy has so far yielded some very heartening results. We look forward to welcoming four new minority professors to campus in the fall, among our regular assistant-professor hirings. The statistics that Mrs. Thernstrom cites are sobering, and are familiar to many of us who have been working assiduously to increase the number of faculty members of color. It is important also to recall, as the author mentions more briefly, that there are a number of programs now in place to encourage some of our most scholarly young minority students to choose teaching as their career.

Nannerl O. Keohane
President, Wellesley College
Wellesley, Massachusetts

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Abigail M. Thernstrom rejects the liberal extremists who say that whites and blacks "act and think differently." But she never doubts that it would be good for blacks to become graduate students and professors in ever greater numbers. She does not seem to share the suspicion that many conscientious conservatives feel instinctively when they encounter today's academics.

Academic careers might well be a good thing for minorities, or for anybody at all, if they were actually as Mrs. Thernstrom imagines them to be. But when she says that "books are keys which open the doors to [a] larger world" or when she argues against role-model teachers, saying that "good books fashion bonds among seemingly dissimilar people," . . . is she not taking a naive view of America's universities?. . . .

Today's academics are hostile to the American founders and to what today's conservatives have come to call the original intent of the Constitution. They want passionately to substitute their new leveling social science for America's traditional idea of meritocracy. . . .

The new social scientists are hostile to studying good books for reasons they consider to be political and moral. They are hostile not just to academic standards, but to the old education itself, because they are hostile to the old Constitution of natural law and natural rights. And they share with the world's leftover adherents of Communism a disdain for America's "mass culture." . . .

Advocates of the new social science easily fall in with classifying human beings according to genetic categories, even as they claim to be fighting racism. Harvard's Derrick A. Bell, and those like him, who express the conscience of the faithful on America's faculties, know this and use their knowledge effectively against naive reformers like Mrs. Thernstrom. . . .

Mrs. Thernstrom should stop trying to patch up minority problems through programs which would almost certainly be run by academics trained in psychology, the main stronghold—except for comparative-government departments—of the new social science. We who are in the fight for civil rights should instead concentrate on reeducating the faculties who run such programs. Until considerable changes are made, most blacks and other minorities need to *avoid* joining up with today's schools. . . .

David Broyles
Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

To the Editor of Commentary:

As a black female professor who does not believe that "writing books is 'boring,'" I roundly applaud Abigail M. Thernstrom's

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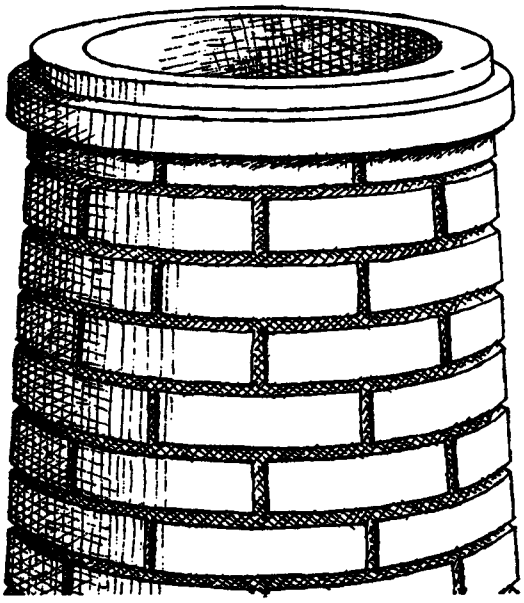
A fuming smokestack is the perfect symbol of our national dilemma. On one hand, it means the jobs and products we need. On the other, it means pollution. ❧ Some think having one without the other will take a miracle. We think it will take natural gas. ❧ Because gas, the cleanest of all fossil fuels, can reduce emissions across the board. You name it— CO, CO_2, NO_x, SO_2, particulates—and natural gas combustion produces none or substantially less. ❧ But gas is more than clean. It's extremely efficient as well. So even fewer pollutants are created since less fuel is expended to do a job. ❧ Which also reduces costs. And that's another argument favoring gas. It makes the fight against pollution more affordable. ❧ And, since nature blessed North America with vast stores of gas, it's a fight we can definitely win. With energy security and a better trade balance as a bonus. ❧ Natural gas. It's not the only answer. Just the best one we have right now.



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generally insightful, realistic, and refreshing article against racial double standards. Still, I have a few quibbles.

Mrs. Thernstrom's use of the term "minority" is distorting: Duke University pledged to hire more *black*, not more *minority* faculty; and, as she surely knows, Asian minority students do not have low graduation rates. So why disparagingly co-join them with other minorities? When discussions of affirmative action and related matters eschew the classic definition of minority as pertaining to racial or ethnic oppression by a dominant group, then clarity and fairness demand nothing less than an explicit definition of the term.

Mrs. Thernstorm actually uses the term minority to refer to groups receiving preferentially favorable treatment. She might also have used the concept of "instant minority" to distinguish between or among minority individuals who were themselves historically subjected to racial or ethnic discrimination and those who were not, but who benefit or could benefit from their preferential classification. American immigrants arriving since 1965, who are preferentially favored as minorities, are, in fact, instant minorities.

Mrs. Thernstrom's group comparisons of black and white academic performances, while accurate, lead to her egregious fallacy of treating individual black students homogeneously. As she should know, they are not. The admission and hiring of academically inferior black students and faculty by major white institutions unfairly stereotypes academically superior black students and faculty. Yet the presence of academically inferior white students and faculty does not reflect negatively upon *their* counterparts. Had Mrs. Thernstrom balanced her commentary, she would have noted that some black students on major white campuses also graduate "on time." This imbalance is repeated in her notable silence about black professors (including Derrick A. Bell) who find writing stimulating rather than boring and who contribute tomes to their respective disciplines. . . .

Mrs. Thernstrom also seems to be naive about the latent interests of most proponents of the black role-model idea on white campuses. Their stated concern about the need of black students for black role models typically masks their real concern about increasing black job slots, and especially about serving as "black brokers" for black students and faculty on white campuses. Far too many top-level white administrators (e.g., college presidents) on major white campuses have caved in to black opportunists by creating "black mini-campuses," an unsavory practice that fosters racial bigotry. Many black students on white campuses do not need more black faculty as role models (read babysitters). Instead, . . . more of these black students must reach out for mentors in their disciplines, without regard to race, . . . from competent faculty. Here, of course, Mrs. Thernstrom is right: it is academically and ethically reprehensible and repugnant for colleges and universities to use racial double standards. As Thomas Sowell has often noted, and as Kenneth Clark did before him, this invidiously racist practice really harms black students.

Some universities and colleges might help to improve black academic performances in high school, but this is not their task. Nor can the poor academic performance of many black students be laid solely at their feet, or at the feet of their parents. Here Mrs. Thernstrom's imbalance appears again: she overlooks the extremely poor quality of public elementary schools that enroll most disadvantaged blacks, as well as the failure of most local and state public officials—black and white—to sanction and implement school-choice vouchers for disadvantaged black students. Contrary to Mrs. Thernstrom's assertion, the core of the problem of few black professors is not ". . . the poor academic performance of black students at every level," but, by and large, the poor academic instruction and curricula presented to disadvantaged black students at the elementary and secondary levels and in most black colleges and universities.

Finally, Mrs. Thernstrom notes correctly that many successful black undergraduates are not interested in academic careers. To carry this notion a step further, and barring invidious discrimination, there is no reason why the black and white occupational distribution must be the same; quotas based on race and sex should be impermissible in hiring faculty, as well as in many other areas. . . .

JACQUELYNE JOHNSON JACKSON
Durham, North Carolina

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Permit me to point out an error of 1 percent in Abigail M. Thernstrom's "On the Scarcity of Black Professors."

The article asks the question, how many of the 16,000 doctoral degrees awarded in 1988 to citizens of the U.S. by American universities were awarded to black Americans? The answer is 357, or 2.2 percent of the Ph.D.'s. But blacks comprise 12 percent of the population. Mrs. Thernstrom then writes that "If blacks were represented in proportion to their numbers in the population, the figure would be about 2,100—or 12 percent." But 12 percent of 16,000 is not 2,100, but 1,920.

THOMAS PUTNAM
Buffalo, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The situation described in the article by Abigail M. Thernstrom made me, as a former law professor, sick to my stomach.

The university is a unique place for study, knowledge, and research; it is not a place for pandering to the educational, social, or economic needs of any minority. It is a place for the study and examination of the heavens and the earth, for pure science, and for pure intellectual pursuit. . . . The present nationwide attempt to lower the accepted standards for admission, scholarship, graduation, and teaching requirements of the university . . . can only result in a weakening and dilution of standards. . . .

When Jews came to North America at the turn of this century and after the Holocaust I do not recall that universities bent over backward to lower their standards for admission, graduation, and hiring of faculty to assist them, nor were special funding programs made available to them because they were a minority. . . .

What is this nonsense all about—a sense of guilt on the part of Americans because of past history? . . .

NAME WITHHELD

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The University of California at Berkeley is often the leader in liberal fads, and the issue of faculty diversification is no exception. As the former editor of a conservative student newspaper at Berkeley, I have had quite a few eye-opening personal encounters with leaders of

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the "Diversity Coalition" on campus.

In the spring of 1989, the coalition compiled a list of departments which in its view had inadequate numbers of minority faculty. In a formal letter to the chancellor, it demanded that of the next four hirings in each department, two must be women, one Asian-American, one African-American, one Hispanic, and one Native American. The concrete statistics in Mrs. Thernstrom's article clearly demonstrate how preposterous such a demand is. The coalition gave a little ground by acknowledging that it might be difficult to find a Native American chemistry professor, but nonetheless its members did not waver in their demands.

Even more disturbing than this list of demands was the coalition's belief that any minority professor identified by the university should be automatically hired, that the firing of white faculty members to make room for minority faculty should not be excluded, and that if the professor in question preferred to go elsewhere, the university's own offer should be made more attractive.

The coalition saw meritocracy as a "Eurocentric" set of standards imposed in order to maintain a predominantly white faculty, and summarily rejected it.

In the group's view, the primary purpose of hiring minority faculty members was to provide role models for minority students. One member of the Asian Student Union pushed the point even further when he argued that because of insurmountable cultural differences, Asian students learn better from Asian professors and black students learn better from black professors. Both these arguments are fatally flawed. To begin with, what kind of a role model will a minority professor represent if his teaching quality and prestige are substandard? . . . And secondly, the argument that black students require black professors and Asian students require Asian professors, when carried to its logical conclusion, implies nothing short of a total reversal of *Brown* v. *Board of Education*.

Proponents of such hiring practices profess altruistic objectives, . . . but institutional racial preferences have always resulted in more harm than good. . . .

PHAEDRA WALKER
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The one minor criticism I have of Abigail M. Thernstrom's incisive article is that she only briefly touches on the consequences to academic freedom of this colossal campaign. If affirmative-action officers are really allowed to accept or reject candidates for faculty positions on the basis of their presumed racial "sensitivity," this would amount to a political test for academic appointments which, so far as I am aware, is the first of its kind in this country. One irony is that this search for ideological unanimity is justified, in a way that George Orwell would have especially appreciated, as a form of "diversity." A second irony is that at a time when formerly Communist countries are abandoning their attempts at academic indoctrination, we should be beginning our own version here.

ROBERT LERNER
Center for the Study of Social and Political Change
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts

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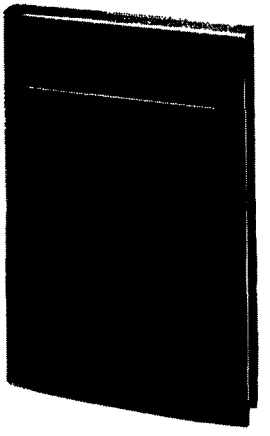

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ABIGAIL M. THERNSTROM writes:

OK, Wellesley College is not going to "require" the appointment of minority-group members. I stand corrected. But the distinction between goals and quotas at places like Wellesley is close to meaningless. When heavy pressure is put on departments to hire minority-group members and when the salaries of such appointees do not count against the regular departmental budget, a system of set-asides has, in effect, been established. Searches are conducted for positions for which whites need not apply. When Nannerl O. Keohane tells her faculty that universities should be taking the lead in delivering the message that color is irrelevant to quality, then I'll be impressed.

David Broyles writes that I am a "naive reformer." I take it as a compliment. Total paralysis and cynicism aren't going to get us anywhere. I couldn't find anything in Jacquelyne Johnson Jackson's long and thoughful letter with which I disagreed. Clearly, on some points, I did not state my views with sufficient clarity. For instance, I too believe that black students are very badly served by inner-city public schools, and, in a lengthy forthcoming report for the Pioneer Institute in Boston, I have proposed a voucher experiment for Massachusetts.

Thomas Putnam has caught me in a slip of the calculator. There were 357 black Ph.D.'s in 1988, 2.2 percent of the total going to American citizens. Had blacks been represented in accord with their share of the U.S. population—12 percent—the number would have been 1,920, as he suggests, not 2,100. The corrected figures, alas, do not make the bleak picture more than a shade brighter.

Sovietology

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Of course I fully agree with Arch Puddington when he says in his splendid article, "The Anti-Cold War Brigade" [August], that Reagan's policies greatly contributed to the favorable evolution of the Soviet Union—and pretty well every Soviet I've met, both official and unofficial, supports that view.

But it is absurd of Mr. Puddington to say, "It would be difficult to find a Soviet authority who has been more consistently inaccurate than [Stephen F.] Cohen." I disagree with Stephen Cohen on many points, and his political analyses are politically aligned. But his scholarship is sound; his views of the nature and extent of Stalinism are solid and sensible. It would be very easy to "find" half-a-dozen reasonably well-known Sovietologists who are guilty not merely of what we may consider to be political misjudgment but also of professional incompetence, and the distinction is an important one.

ROBERT CONQUEST
Hoover Institution
Stanford, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Arch Puddington has given us a good and useful rundown on the "anti-cold war brigade." But what is missing from his article are some conclusions about what motives could have led these people to cling to a set of delusions under which the Soviets were seeking only peace and justice while the U.S. was the warmonger and chief supporter of torturers and oppressors.

The explanation would not necessarily fit all cases. It would be difficult, for example, to lump together George Kennan, and Richard Barnet of the radical Institute for Policy Studies. . . . I have often wondered whether the people exemplified by those in Mr. Puddington's article are dupes, scoundrels, or Eric Hoffer-type True Believers. It would be very interesting to see someone try to trace common threads back to some identifiable motive or set of motives. Or am I being naive in hoping to find a rational explanation for irrationality?

J. EDGAR WILLIAMS
Carrboro, North Carolina

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Perhaps it is no coincidence that Arch Puddington does not provide direct evidence which would demonstrate that Ronald Reagan's policies caused the collapse of Communism. Like our former President, Mr. Puddington is short on facts and long on fervent belief. . . . His attempt to vindicate Reagan and the cold warriors by attacking the anti-cold war brigade . . . is methodologically unsound . . . because the facts indicate that neither side caused the collapse of Communism. Since the "anti-cold war brigade" has never been in power, it cannot receive the credit, and neither does it seek it. The cold warriors, however, have been in power since the end of World War II. A proper critique would therefore focus on their activities. . . .

Despite Mr. Puddington's denial, Strobe Talbott (among others) was correct when he credited Mikhail Gorbachev with unleashing "positive change in the Communist world." The logic is very simple: when Reagan confronted Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko there was no positive change, but when he confronted Gorbachev there was. As we know, Gorbachev moved rapidly. The cold warriors who seek to credit Reagan with Communism's collapse must therefore explain why Reagan was able to move Gorbachev when he had been unable to move Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko. I would find such an explanation quite interesting. I suspect, however, that a stronger argument could be made for asserting that it was Gorbachev who moved Reagan.

Closer examination of the collapse would reveal that Nikita Khrushchev also contributed to it, as did Marshal Ogarkov, each of whom had realized that the Stalinist system was a dead end. . . . Andrei Sakharov and other dissidents also deserve mention, though the pivotal figure, short of Gorbachev himself, was Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. The publication of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in the Soviet Union (1962) and the publication abroad of *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973) did more to undermine the Stalinist system both inside and outside Russia than all the blustering and weapons of our cold warriors in the years 1945-85. Yet one searches Mr. Puddington's essay in vain for mention of Solzhenitsyn's role. One suspects that a willful ignorance is at work here, one which hesitates to credit Solzhenitsyn (normally the darling of the conservatives) not only for fear of minimizing Reagan's role, but also for fear of revealing how abysmally the cold warriors failed to recognize the possibility of change under Communism.

This general tendency to ignore change in the Soviet Union, unless it is for the worse, can be attributed to the cold warriors' ideological blinders. They learned from Merle Fainsod that "the totalitarian regime does not shed its police-state characteristics; it dies when power is wrenched [presumably by Reagan] from its hands." These same scholars applauded Jeane J. Kirk-

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patrick's now thoroughly discredited distinction between "authoritarian" and "totalitarian" regimes.

Finally, Mr. Puddington's broadside against the anti-cold war brigade curiously ignores the efforts of Jerry Hough. Hough's study, *Soviet Leadership in Transition* (1980), predicted a generational change which would usher in better-educated leaders with greater self-confidence, who were less ideological and more willing to take risks than the gerontocracy they replaced. I know of no cold-warrior study which approaches the prescience of Hough's work.

To summarize: change came from within, and Hough was one member of the anti-cold war brigade who predicted it precisely; other scholars, such as George Kennan and Stephen F. Cohen, were also emphasizing the changes occurring in the Soviet Union. The cold warriors, I'm afraid, had other fish to fry. Now people like Mr. Puddington . . . seek to deflect scrutiny by claiming victory, and muddying the waters through tendentious essays. . . .

WALTER C. UHLER
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

ARCH PUDDINGTON writes:

I find Robert Conquest's brief on behalf of Stephen F. Cohen puzzling, since Mr. Conquest himself, at least by implication, has been a target of Cohen's broadsides against cold warriors and scholars who employed the totalitarian model in analyzing Soviet reality. It is true that Cohen can claim scholarly achievement; his biography of Nikolai Bukharin was certainly well-received. The problem is that Cohen the scholar has existed in a state of tension with Cohen the publicist, and during the past decade, it would seem that the latter won out. Indeed, here we confront the question, raised by J. Edgar Williams, of what motivated the critics of America's Soviet policy. Those on the Left, a relatively small category, were influenced by high hopes that the Soviets would continue to arm and support revolutionary regimes in the third world. Others, including many who should have known better, seem to have been driven by a seething hatred of Ronald Reagan's foreign policies. Since Reagan's policies were predicated on the (altogether accurate) assumption that the Soviet system was a colossal failure, doomed to be swept into history's ashcan, his critics felt compelled to seek out evidence to the contrary. Thus, article after article was written to demonstrate that conditions in the Soviet Union, if not exactly prosperous, weren't all that bad. In this regard, Stephen F. Cohen enjoyed an advantage over other critics insofar as he was personally acquainted with many of those Communist-party reformists who would later serve in high positions under Gorbachev. By their own account, these reformists felt during the Brezhnev era that the party and Soviet society generally were mired in a profound crisis. Yet they either failed to convey this message to Cohen or he neglected to pass the information on to his readers in America. Instead, Cohen reassured us that the Soviet system, if flawed, was fundamentally sound and enjoyed an impressive level of popular support. Evidence to the contrary would, of course, have posed a dilemma for Cohen, since to acknowledge the existence of a Soviet crisis would have meant supplying "ammunition" to the cold-war perspective. The problem, however, goes even deeper. Cohen has always contended that Soviet socialism as formulated by Lenin would have succeeded had it not run into the Stalinist detour. I have always found the analysis put forward by Robert Conquest, among others, that traced the evils of the Soviet system directly to the Leninist source much more persuasive.

Walter C. Uhler can rest assured that I am aware of and applaud the role of the current Soviet leadership, Gorbachev included, in setting in motion the process which appears to be leading to the dismantling of the Soviet system. Among Mr. Uhler's many errors, however, is his statement that cold warriors "failed to recognize the possibility of change under Communism." What is at work in the Soviet Union, as in Eastern Europe, is not change, but the absolute collapse of Communism. If anti-Communists were guilty of overestimating the Communist system's staying power, they were quite clear in insisting on the impossibility of a changed or reformed Communism, something which Leszek Kolakowski aptly likened to a "fried snowball."

I would also remind Mr. Uhler that Gorbachev had no intention, at the beginning of his leadership, to preside over the collapse of state socialism, as he repeatedly noted in speeches and interviews. Nor was it Gorbachev's aim to permit the collapse of the Soviet empire. His first six months as General Secretary were highlighted by a massive effort to achieve victory for the Soviet Union's allies in Afghanistan, Angola, and Central America. Gorbachev's failure here was due, of course, to the American support for anti-Communist resistance groups, as embodied in the Reagan doctrine. The Reagan doctrine, the deployment of the Euromissiles, Star Wars, the refusal to deal with the Soviet Union as a "normal" country—all played important parts in persuading Gorbachev and his better-educated, more reformist, and Western-oriented colleagues of the dead end of the USSR's foreign-policy direction.

To deal with another point raised by Mr. Uhler, I am perfectly happy to credit Solzhenitsyn for his role in undermining the Soviet system. Solzhenitsyn, of course, had a vision of the Russian future different from that of Andrei Sakharov or Andrei Amalrik, the two opposition intellectuals quoted in my article. But on one issue they were in accord: the creation of an honest, prosperous, and healthy society required the abandonment, not merely the reform, of Communism. Another characteristic of Soviet dissidents was their clear understanding of the difference between totalitarian and authoritarian systems. Before Mr. Uhler dismisses this distinction so contemptuously, he should take a careful look at the current Soviet press, where discussions of the Soviet totalitarian legacy are commonplace. He might also compare the relatively smooth return to democratic rule in, say, Chile with the pain and chaos engulfing the Soviet Union or, for that matter, Poland.

To take up one final point in Mr. Uhler's letter, Jerry Hough's writings on generational changes within the Soviet leadership have been clearly vindicated by developments of the past five years. Unfortunately, Hough's controversial analyses of major changes in Soviet internal affairs have fared less well, having been shown to be greatly exaggerated not merely by the standards of Western cold warriors, but by those of Soviet commentators who, under *glasnost*, have repeatedly emphasized the yawning gap between Soviet governing methods and structures and those in the democratic world.

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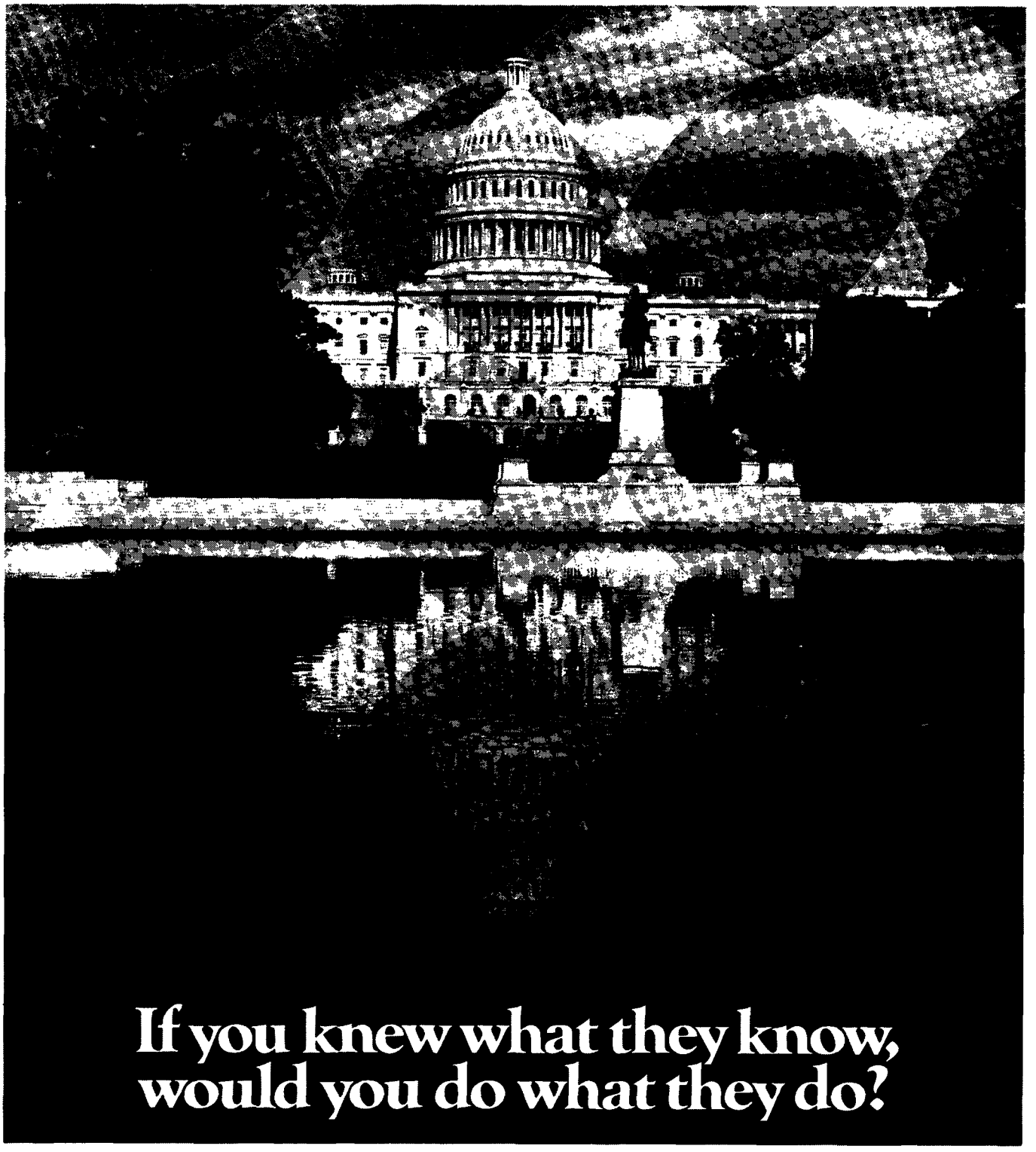

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The 80's

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . COMMENTARY's symposium, "The American 80's: Disaster or Triumph?" [September], provided a veritable orgy of food for thought on the 80's and the Reagan administration. The balance of positive and negative comment was an elegant and sumptuous feast. . . . A few correspondents, to be sure, best exemplified by Paul Berman, were obviously in such pain and agony while grudgingly admitting the pyrrhic "victory" of capitalism over the Communist world that one could feel the pain sympathetically. . . .

PAUL F. MARKS
Brighton, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As I try to reflect on and reexperience the symposium you offered your readers in your great September issue as one totality, my overwhelming emotion is one of gratitude. Through the nineteen authors who responded to your challenge, COMMENTARY has indeed succeeded in clarifying the most important and vital social issues of our time. Now we know who stands where in these days of crisis and decision. . . .

H. JAN RITSCHER
Chestnut Ridge, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I found "The American 80's: Disaster or Triumph?" very interesting. The questions posed by the editors were excellent and in most instances elicited thoughtful comments. In the aftermath of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, it is now clear that the United States is the major power in the world. So those contributors who claimed that the United States did not win the cold war but rather that it was Japan and West Germany which emerged as the leading countries in the world did not have to wait long to be proved wrong. . . .

PHILIP J. SCHILLER
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There is a quip going the rounds that socialism, though dead in the East, is alive and well in American academic circles. A brilliant exception in American academia is Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, whose contribution to your symposium is a most perceptive analysis of the American Left.

DAVID S. LICHTENSTEIN
Rockville, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The contributors to your symposium, "The American 80's: Disaster or Triumph?" missed two major domestic developments that were (and are) of great importance.

One was the Reagan administration's success in shifting large responsibilities to state governments. This gave a massive push to transforming the states into major innovators of public programs and deliverers of public services. In 1979 about 26 percent of dollars spent by state and local governments came from Washington; by 1988 this had dropped to 18 percent. By 1989 state governments were spending $525 billion, 33 percent of it for education and 18 percent for public welfare.

The second development was the Reagan administration's emphasis on defense. This created a huge jobs program far exceeding anything that the most spendthrift of liberal Democrats would allow himself to imagine. And the refurbished and renewed military also served as one of the few upward-mobility programs for African-Americans that seemed to work.

It is curious how American intellectuals of both Right and Left seem indifferent to these two massive influences—state government and the military—as engines of public policy, creators of domestic social programs, and primers of the economic pump. . . .

JOSEPH C. DOHERTY
Chestertown, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Congratulations on your symposium. I regret to say, however, that I found a lack of depth in most of the discussion concerning the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In none of the references to the collapse of Communism did there seem to be any real appreciation of the liberating impact of that collapse on individual human beings. Perhaps the authors involved were never close observers of Communism in practice. I myself was such an observer for several years—admittedly from the safe haven of American citizenship with a diplomatic passport—and upon my return to the United States, my greatest frustration stemmed from the thought that I could never adequately convey to my fellow citizens the nature of a tyrannical regime.

None of the contributors seems able to appreciate the real nature of the tyranny from which people were being liberated. These were no ordinary dictatorships. Unlike earlier kinds, which left many spheres of life untouched and which were eventually replaced, Communist dictatorships were not only total, seeking to control all facets of life, but also seemed permanent. The all-encompassing nature of Communist rule made the people feel helpless and without hope. As one of your contributors wrote, Ronald Reagan's view of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" was essentially shared by those who were forced to live under Soviet rule.

Those who assert that the collapse of Communism was really a victory for the West Germans and the Japanese should be asked this question: would it have been better to have Communist dictatorships continue into the indefinite future? And had they done so, where would we be now in view of the recent developments in the Persian Gulf? . . .

ALEX N. DRAGNICH
Bowie, Maryland

French Anti-Semitism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Roger Kaplan's thoughtful analysis of the extent of anti-Semitism in today's France, "Incident at Carpentras" [August], misses one key point. The anti-Semitism of Jean-Marie Le Pen, his followers and fellow thinkers, is the scum that floats on the surface of a frothing brew of racism. The North African Arab or black from French-speaking Africa has replaced the Jew as the enemy. It may well be that French anti-Semitism does not make life more difficult or fearful (in the sense of physical danger, social harassment, or employment difficulties) for Jews, but French racism poisons and renders miserable the life of blacks and Arabs in France.

Coming from England, I am used to the coded anti-Jewishness of my fellow countrymen, but after ten years of living in France I am shocked at the openly anti-Semitic remarks that are made by the French. Jean-Marie Le Pen is crudely anti-Semitic in his public discourse, yet French television treats him with dignity and respect. Raymond Barre, the former Prime Minister and a well-established political figure, remarked in 1980 after a bombing outside a Jewish restaurant in Paris in which four were killed that it was all the worse

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because "One of them was French." The other three were Jews, you see. At a humdrum level, I am surprised at how French people, including teenagers, identify someone as Jewish—*"C'est un juif"*—in banal conversation and to an extent which certainly would not be normal in England, America, or Germany.

Roger Kaplan is right to stress that anti-Semitism is not on the point of breaking through to become a major political force in France. Le Pen is not Hitler, much as he may dream he is, and most French people believe that six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust, even if there is a lot of interest in the relativism of quantitatively contrasting Hitler's victims with Stalin's in the former's favor.

François Mitterrand's gesture of marching in the anti-Carpentras protest that filled Paris was magnificent; there is simply no other Western leader who would have mingled with people in such a spontaneous street demonstration, conveying a much more direct image than a presidential statement or visit. He has also spoken out more clearly on the danger of racism than any other European leader, a position that swelled his popularity with the young. What is morally right is also good politics.

But while shock and revulsion are expressed at recent manifestations of French anti-Semitism, the daily practice of French racism is wearily lived with. The two, of course, are linked and if ever Le Pen gains real power, or, as is more likely, if some of his policies are taken over by the mainstream conservatives and implemented after electoral success, then while it will be Arabs and Africans who are first in the firing line, do not be surprised if anti-Jewishness is also stepped up.

DENIS MACSHANE
Divonne, France

ROGER KAPLAN writes:

I thank Dennis MacShane for his amplifications and I would not want to quarrel with them. I would add, though, that for analytical purposes we should distinguish between racism and anti-Semitism. Mr. MacShane is right to draw attention to the fact that in practical terms a man motivated by an irrational hatred of Arabs is not much different from a man driven by Jew-hatred, but I am not really convinced that there is a significant rise in racism in Europe.

What has happened instead over the past few years is that certain hatreds have come out more openly—for all sorts of reasons having to do with the failure of the political establishment to deal with issues that really concern people. If one looks at the voluminous report of the European Parliament on racism, one discovers that beneath the alarming rhetoric ("return of the fascist peril," etc.) are to be found the same fringe parties that have been around for years and the same numbers of protest voters who will give these parties their votes in inconsequential elections (such as, precisely, elections to the Europarliament).

Nor is there so much a rise in anti-Semitism as, again, a less inhibited atmosphere about allowing it to come out. This is quite striking in Central and Eastern Europe. The Communists, since they controlled everything, kept the lid on anti-Semitism, using it for their own purposes when it suited them (notably in the USSR in the early 50's and in Poland, and of course for purposes of foreign policy). Now that they cannot keep the lid on any longer, the old anti-Semitism has come bubbling out. This is not too surprising. Since the Communists could not even solve the problem of sickness or the problem of malnutrition in their societies, who would have expected them to solve the problem of anti-Semitism?

What we are witnessing is both a new era (the post-post whatever one wants to call it) and, as always happens with so-called new eras, the return of old habits. The "normal" European tendencies toward racism and anti-Semitism (and other hatreds besides) is back, and who expected otherwise?

However, I remain less alarmed about these tendencies in Europe than Mr. MacShane and the Europarliamentarians. All things must be viewed against the standard of what is possible. After all, instead of living in Europe we—I mean Mr. MacShane and I—could be living in Africa or the bloody Middle East where (outside of Israel) there are *real* racists, not to mention anti-Semites, real in the sense that they reflect ordinary people's views of what politics is *for*—namely, for killing whoever is not in your clan.

The Holocaust Museum

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I commend Edward Norden's thoughtful review of Judith Miller's *One, by One, by One: Facing the Holocaust* [Books in Review, August]. But I cannot let pass the questions he raises about the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Mr. Norden asks if the museum belongs on the nation's Mall (why remember the Holocaust "so prominently?"); he worries that an effective, historically accurate exhibition might be turned into an accusatory statement by Jews aimed at Christians (visitors might be "insulted in their patriotism"); and the *fact* of the museum seems to him to invite an anti-Semitic backlash ("proof of the disproportionate attention-grabbing and guilt-manipulating power" of a "shrinking group in the American tapestry").

Mr. Norden's fears are unfounded. A unanimous Congress and three Presidents have deemed the site to be appropriate. The very successful campaign to raise private funds for building and endowment attests as well to a broad public appeal.

If the "American way," as Mr. Norden suggests, is "to render the event in its universal aspect," the museum's interpretative dimensions fall squarely within the American mainstream. General lessons drawn from the particularities of the event yield instructive insights not limited to any one people.

The Mall's boundaries are the marbled edifices of the nation's instruments of government. In many ways the Holocaust museum underscores the warnings of Madison, Jefferson, Hamilton, and others regarding the frailty of human nature, the fragility of institutions, and the prerequisities of a successful democracy, at the heart of which is an educated citizenry. The Mall, contrary to Mr. Norden's implication, is more than a national shrine to which pilgrims pay homage to secular deities; its monuments and memorials also serve as sober reminders of the delicate balance struck between national deeds of good and episodes of great tragedy.

The museum complex is fundamentally educational. By holding fast to its mission, tendered by the

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best scholarship available, it advances the highest pedagogical goal. Mr. Norden's reluctance to display instances of human failing ignores the true capacity of the American public to penetrate myths and to face hard historical realities. Witness the effectiveness of the Smithsonian's Bicentennial of the Constitution exhibition, a detailed examination of war hysteria and racism that resulted in the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Surely, patriotism should be inspired less by hagiography than by serious self-reflection and a sensitive appreciation of the ambiguities of human interaction.

The museum's exhibitions and programs will be designed so that Americans understand the centrality of the Jewish tragedy as well as the fact that there were millions of other innocent victims of Nazi racism and fanaticism. To do otherwise would be an unfaithful rendition of the event, timidly predicated upon an ostrich-like retreat from an imagined sense of divisiveness. The Holocaust was a catastrophe of significance to all. It contains universal lessons and warns us of the dangers of unbridled hatred, the perversion of state power twisted toward evil purposes, and the awful consequences of silence and indifference.

Mr. Norden does us a service in raising some important issues about the challenges inherent in the museum project. We are confident that when the museum opens its doors to the public in 1993, these issues will be perceived to be without foundation.

SARA J. BLOOMFIELD
Executive Director
United States Holocaust
Memorial Council
Washington, D.C.

EDWARD NORDEN writes:

In my review, I did not predict that the Holocaust museum would have unhappy results. All I did, as Sara J. Bloomfield starts out by saying, was to raise the possibility. I hope to be proven overly anxious.

Pilgrims & Palestinians

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I enjoyed reading "Feminist Pilgrims" by Paul V. Mankowski, S.J. [June] on some of the recent absurdities in Nicaragua and the predictable reaction by some North American observers from the loony Left.

I am a product of Jesuit education and I had despaired of finding any diversity recently among Jesuits. Actually, I think the whole situation cries out for the resurrection of another Catholic writer, Evelyn Waugh, but then he might have trouble getting published in Jesuit publications.

THOMAS M. COMERFORD
Dallas, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Paul V. Mankowski refers to . . . Achish the king of Gath (I Samuel 221:12 *ff*) whom he tags "an up-country Palestinian chief." Gath was in Philistia, the original Palestine, an area about fifty miles long on the Mediterranean and about twelve miles wide, including Gaza and Ashdod. Those "Palestinians" were not Arabs, however. They were refugees from Greece, . . . who after the fall of the Mycenean cities displaced the local Canaanites. Achish, the "up-country Palestinian," should not be confused with today's Palestinian.

SUE GOLDEN LERNER
Jerusalem, Israel

Israel's Economy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his review of Ezra Sohar's *Israel's Dilemma* [Books in Review, August], Irwin M. Stelzer writes: "Other than calling . . . for tax cuts and privatization, and urging Israelis to 'tell their government to get off their back,' Sohar has little to say by way of prescription." What a strange position for a resident fellow of the American Enterprise Institute to take! If, as Sohar says, two-thirds of Israeli workers are employed by the government or by the Histadrut (quasi-government), then Israel is a socialist country. Its economic failure is then no more surprising than that of the USSR, and the cure is the same in both cases: free enterprise.

Concerning prospects for change in Israel, the key is the U.S. Without American handouts, the Israeli government would have long ago lost its ability to maintain its stranglehold on the Israeli economy, and the "complete overhaul" needed would have taken place.

Considering Israel's matchless academic and technical workforce (now reinforced by immigrants from the USSR), such an overhaul would likely propel Israel into the forefront of world industry, defense expenditures and all (note the example of Switzerland).

MICHAEL GREENGARD
Holon, Israel

IRWIN M. STELZER writes:

Michael Greengard points to nothing in Ezra Sohar's book that fills the gap to which my review referred: the lack of specific suggestions for change. Surely, a general call for reducing the government's role in Israel's economic life is not enough—any more than is a general call for *perestroika*. The hard work is to develop a plan for currency reform, for privatization of various enterprises, for reducing trade-union power. Sohar didn't see it to be his job to get that specific. That's a pity, for in this case God is in the details.

As for Mr. Greengard's suggestion that an end to U.S. aid would force the Israeli government to adopt economic reforms, all I can say is that it might—if the patient survived the medicine. Israel, bereft of U.S. aid, might prove a very tempting target for Messrs. Arafat and Saddam Hussein, and might not last long enough to obtain the undoubted benefits of a market system. That's the dilemma.

The solution? Probably continuing U.S. aid, but making it contingent on implementation of an agreed program of economic reform. And if Israel refuses? The answer to that question cannot come from a mere economist, even one resident at the American Enterprise Institute.

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Socialism: Guilty As Charged

David Horowitz

Dear C.,

It has been over a decade since this silence as durable as an iron curtain descended between us. In these circumstances, I have had to depend on others to learn how you regard me these days: how, at a recent social gathering, you referred to me as "one of the two tragedies of the New Left" (the other being a former Brecht scholar who now publishes guides to the nude beaches of America); how my apostasy has inflicted an emotional wound, as though in changing my political views and leaving the Left I had personally betrayed you.

I understand this. How could it be otherwise for people like us, for whom politics was less a matter of practical decisions than of moral choices? We saw ourselves as partisans of a cause that confirmed our humanity (even as it denied humanity to those who opposed us). To leave such ranks was not a simple matter, like abandoning a misconception or admitting a mistake. It was more like accusing one's comrades. Like condemning a life.

Our choice of politics was never a matter of partial commitments; to choose the Left was to define a way of being in the world. (For us, the personal was always political.) It was choosing a future in which human beings would finally live as they were meant to live: no longer *self-alienated* and divided, but equal, harmonious, and whole.

Grandiose as this project was, it was not something we had invented, but the inspiration for a movement that was coterminous with modernity itself. As one of our mentors had taught us, the Left was launched at the time of the French Revolution by Gracchus Babeuf and the "Conspiracy of the Equals." (The Babeuf conspiracy, Marx wrote, "gave rise to the Communist idea, . . . the principle of the modern world.") With a terrible simplicity the Babouvists pledged themselves to "equality or death," swiftly finding the latter—in a prophetic irony—on the Revolution's own busy and bloodstained guillotine.

The new radicals proclaimed a Theology of Reason in which equality of condition was the natural and true order of creation. In their Genesis, it was the loss of equality that was the ultimate source of mankind's suffering and evil, just as the arrogant pride of the primal couple had provoked their Fall in the religious myths now discarded. Private property became a secular version of original sin. Through property, society reimposed on every generation the travails of inequality and evil and the toils of injustice. Redemption from worldly suffering was possible only through the Revolution that would abolish property and open the gates to the socialist Eden—to Paradise regained.

The ideas embodied in this theology of liberation became the inspiration for the rise of the political Left, and have remained so ever since. It was only half a century later, however, that Marx first articulated the idea of a historical redemption, in the way that became resonant for us:

> *Communism* is the *positive* abolition of *private property*, of *human self-alienation*, and thus the real *appropriation* of *human* nature through and for man. It is therefore the return of man himself as a *social*, i.e., really human, being. . . . [Emphasis in original]

This was our revolutionary vision: by a historical coup we would create the conditions for a return to the state of true humanity whose realization had been blocked by the alienating hierarchies of private property. All the unjust institutions of class history, which had distorted, divided, and oppressed mankind, would be abolished and human innocence reborn. In the service of this cause, no sacrifice seemed too great, no burden too onerous: we were the Christopher Columbuses of the human future, the avatars of a new world in the womb of the old.

How could I divorce myself from a mission like this without betraying those whom I had left behind? Especially without betraying those like yourself who had been my guides and my comrades in the 60's through the moral wilderness created by the disintegration of the Old Left.

I was the scion of that Old Left—of Communists, in fact—and I was troubled by the crimes the "Khrushchev Report" of 1956 had recently unveiled. Yet even as the unmarked graves of Stalin's victims were reopened and their wounds bled afresh, a New Left raised

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its collective voice to proclaim that it was Stalinism which had died, not socialism. In the moral and political confusion of those years, this view of the matter helped to restore my radical beliefs. And so I joined you and the other pioneers of the New Left who condemned Stalinism and its brutal past and pledged to keep the socialist faith.

What was the meaning of this refusal to admit that our ideas had been wrong? For thirty years, with only a minority in dissent, the best minds of the Left had hailed the flowering of the "progressive" state in Soviet Russia. They had made the defense of Soviet "achievements" the *sine qua non* of what it was to be socially conscious and morally correct. Now the Kremlin itself had acknowledged the monstrous "mistakes" of the progressive experiment, confirming the most damning charges of its political enemies. Yet in the face of such epic criminality and collusion, all we could think of doing was to renew our dedication to the goals that had proved so destructive in the first place.

To be sure, our radical generation was hardly the first (and would not be the last) to go through this cycle of guilt and renewed dedication. It was a process that had begun 200 years earlier, in that dawn of human Fraternity and Reason, which also devolved into fratricidal terror and military empire. But how had the redemptive illusions that inspired the Left been kept alive in generation after generation, despite the inexorable rebuke of human tragedy that attended each of its triumphs?

It was only two decades later, when I had reached the end of my own radical journey and had had my second thoughts, that I began asking myself this question. And it was only then that I was able at last to see how our own modest histories provided the basis of an answer.

You have had no second thoughts. Even as I write, you and many others of my former comrades are engaged in yet one more defiant resurrection, bringing into being yet one more generation of the Left, as eager to believe in the fantasy of a new world as we were then. In this *annus mirabilis* of Communist collapse, when the socialist idea is being repudiated throughout the expanse of the Soviet empire by the very masses it claimed to liberate, all of you are still searching for ways to deny what has happened.

For you, the socialist idea is still capable of an immaculate birth from the bloody conception of the socialist state. You seek to evade the lesson of revolutionary history by writing the phrase ACTUALLY EXISTING SOCIALISM in bold letters across its pages, thus distinguishing the socialism of your faith from the socialism that has failed. The historic bankruptcy of the planned societies created by Marxist dictators, a human catastrophe extending across nearly three quarters of a century and encompassing numberless ruined lives, is not to be entered in the balance sheet of the Left. This would require of you an accurate accounting and an agonizing self-appraisal. Instead, the bankruptcy is to be seen as someone else's.

Thus, in the spring of 1989, in a *Dissent* article entitled "Toward a New Socialism," the late Michael Harrington (the leader of the self-described Democratic Socialists of America) wrote:

> In part the current crisis of socialism is the result of misunderstandings on the part of non- and anti-socialists and, unfortunately, even of some socialists themselves; . . . for at least a generation practically no democratic socialist has accepted [this] underlying assumption: that the Soviet Union and similar societies are either exemplars or approximations of socialism.

There is nothing new in this shell game. It is the same rescue operation that we ourselves performed on Stalinism after 1956, when our slogan was: Stalinism Is Dead—Long Live Socialism. Today you and your "progressive" comrades look on the demonstrations for democracy that are bringing an end to Communist history and are certain that this is not a judgment on the ideas that inspired that history in the first place.

"The vast social upheaval inaugurated by Gorbachev is only entering its fifth year," observed Daniel Singer, the literal (and intellectual) godson of our old teacher Isaac Deutscher, in the 1989 May Day issue of the *Nation*. Singer then advised his readers that

> one major question dominates the transformation that is under way: was 1917 a historical quirk, an aberration, a parenthesis that is now coming to an end? Or, to put the same question less gloomily, was it a utopian attempt, a portent of things to come in another place and another age? Put either way, the question implies that the whole Soviet venture can only have a capitalist ending. Yet there is another possibility. This is that for all its strange beginning in backward Russia, . . . 1917 was the beginning of a process, of a vast movement that continues to search for another world. . . .

Actually Existing Socialism Is Dead—Long Live Socialism. This is the political formula of the Left—of your Left—today.

Of course, the possibilities of "another world" that Singer so amazingly still locates in the Soviet Union were found by our own generation in the third-world revolutions of the post-Stalin era. The Cuban and Chinese "experiments" had begun by declaring their independence from the old discredited Soviet "model," and yet, as if shaped by some invisible Marxist hand, had ended in the same way: one-party totalitarian regimes, submerging both economy and people in despotism and despair. So, too, with Nicaragua under the Sandinistas. And in each case, the "independent" Left was there to celebrate and apologize.

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What made the Left so willing to ignore the gravitational pull of Marxist prescriptions, and to discount the evils of Marxist rule, was a vision that was not so much Marxist in any strict sense as (to borrow the term used by the radical sociologist C. Wright Mills) *Marxisant*. This perspective, decreeing a divorce between present reality and the future to come, was the heart of our radical illusion. Our confidence in the outcome of the historical process allowed us to put our talents on the Communist side of the cold-war conflict (or at least against the anti-Communist side), even though we recognized "really existing Communism" as an offense to the spirit of the socialism we believed in.

The British historian E.P. Thompson, a former Communist and a founder of the New Left, explained the paradox by which we had given our allegiance to an intellectual abstraction and wound up acting as partisans of a reality we disdained:

> In general, our allegiance to Communism was political: it arose from inexorable choices in a partisan world in which neutrality seemed impossible. . . . But our intellectual allegiance was to Marxism. . . . Thus there is a sense in which, even before 1956, our solidarity was given not to Communist states in their existence, but in their potential—not for what they were but for what—given a diminution in the cold war—they might become.

Yes indeed: our solidarity was given to states *in their potential*. We refused to become anti-Communist cold warriors and offered "critical support" to repulsive Communist regimes because *we believed they would change*. It was the "humanist potential" of societies with socialist foundations, not their totalitarian realities, that claimed our allegiance. (By the same reasoning, we were unimpressed by the democratic realities of the capitalist West, because it was axiomatic that private property rendered them oppressive and incapable of "fundamental" reform.) We refused to join in the attack on the Communist camp in the cold-war battles, no matter how morally justified, because we did not want to aid those seeking to destroy the seeds of the future that the Left had sown in Soviet Russia. We were determined to defend what Trotsky had called "the gains of October"—the socialist edicts of the Bolshevik Revolution that had abolished private property and paved the way for a better world. It was our perception of the epoch-making character of these "gains" that defined our radical faith.

This faith was the key to the double standards that ruled our thinking and caused us so much difficulty in winning adherents. For we were constantly vulnerable to attack by our conservative opponents for the support (however "critical") we gave to totalitarian states where values we claimed to champion—freedom and human rights—were absent, and for the enmity (however disguised as friendly criticism) we directed at the Western democracies where such values were present.

These double standards took many forms. One was the invocation of moral absolutes in judging capitalist regimes, while relativistic historical criteria were used to evaluate their socialist counterparts. Unlike capitalist injustice, repellent practices in the socialist bloc were always placed in their "proper" context and thereby "understood" as the product of preexisting social and political conditions—i.e., as attempts to cope with intractable legacies of a soon to be discarded past.

Secondly, capitalist and socialist regimes were always assessed under different assumptions about their future prospects. Repressions by conservatives like Pinochet in Chile were never seen as preludes to democratic restorations but condemned instead as unmitigated evils. By contrast, the far greater and more durable repressions of revolutionary regimes like the one in Cuba were invariably minimized as necessary and temporary stages along the path to a progressive future.

Finally, in left-wing arguments the negative aspects of existing socialism were always attributed to capitalist influences (survival of the elements of the old society, impact of anti-Communist "encirclement," tyranny of the world market, etc.), but the reverse possibility was never considered. Thus, leftist histories ritualistically invoked Hitler to explain the rise of Stalinism (the necessity of a draconian industrialization to meet the Nazi threat) but never viewed Stalinism as a factor contributing to the rise of Hitler. Yet beginning with the socialist assault on bourgeois democracy and the forced-labor camps (which were a probable inspiration for Auschwitz), Stalinism was a far more palpable influence in shaping German politics in the 30's than was Nazism in Soviet developments. The "Trotskyite conspiracy with the Mikado and Hitler"—the cabal which the infamous Moscow show trials of the 30's claimed to expose—was a Stalinist myth; but the alliance that German Communists formed with the Nazi party to destroy the Weimar Republic was an actual Stalinist plot. Without this alliance, Hitler would never have come to power.

The same double standard underlay the Left's failure to understand the cold war that followed the allied victory in 1945. Leftist cold-war histories refuse to concede that the anti-Communist policies of the Western powers were a reasonable response to the threat they faced; instead, the threat itself is viewed as a fantasy of anti-Communist paranoia. Soviet militarism and imperialism, including the occupation of Eastern Europe, are discounted as defensive reactions to Western containment. But the same Western actions, in particular the anti-Communist military build-up, are then alleged to have had no influence on the unilateral Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe in 1989 which summarily ended

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the cold war. In sum, positive developments in the Soviet bloc come from within; negative developments are consequences of the counterrevolutionary encirclement.

The double standard that informs the argument of the Left is the expression of its own false consciousness, the reflex by which it defends an identity rooted in its belief in the redemptive power of the socialist idea. To the Left it is obvious that the revolution cannot be judged by the same standards as the counterrevolution: the first is a project to create a truly human future, the latter only an attempt to preserve an anti-human past. No matter how destructively revolution fails, it always deserves allegiance, because revolutionary evil is only a birth pang of the future.

It was this birth in which I finally ceased to believe. The imagined future in whose name all these actual revolutions had been relieved of their failures and absolved of their sins was, I eventually came to see, nothing more than a mistaken idea.

THE intellectual figure who most influenced my realization of this liberating fact was another member of our New Left vanguard, the Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski. In the 60's, Kolakowski had written *Towards A Marxist Humanism*, whose chapter titles read like stages of our radical rebirth. But in the 70's, after leaving Poland for the West, he published a comprehensive history of Marxist thought, the world view we all had spent half a lifetime inhabiting.* In three volumes and 1,500 pages Kolakowski analyzed the entire corpus of this intellectual tradition. Then, having paid critical homage to an argument which had dominated so much of humanity's fate over the last hundred years (and his own destiny as well), he added an epilogue which began with these words: "Marxism has been the greatest fantasy of our century." This struck me as the most personally courageous judgment a man with Kolakowski's history could have made.

It was appropriate that the final terrain of battle should be Marxism. For Thompson had it right, our allegiance *was* to Marxism. Not to this particular thesis or that doctrinal principle, but to the paradigm itself: politics as civil war; history as a drama of social redemption. If we remained in the ranks of the Marxist Left, it was not because we failed to recognize the harsh facts that Marxists had created, but because we did not want to betray the vision we shared with the creators.

And so the question that would irrevocably come to divide us was not whether Marxists had committed this revolutionary crime, or whether that revolutionary solution had veered off course, but whether the Marxist idea itself could be held accountable for the horrors that had been perpetrated in its name.

It was on this very point that Kolakowski threw down his gauntlet, declaring that Marx's ideas could not be rescued from the human ruins they had created, that "the primordial intention" of Marx's dream was itself "not innocent." Marxism, Kolakowski announced at the outset of his book, was an idea that "began in Promethean humanism and culminated in the monstrous tyranny of Stalinism." History had shown, and analysis confirmed, that there was no reason to expect that socialism could ever become real "except in the cruel form of despotism." The idea of socialism could not be freed from the taint incurred by its actual practice and thus revitalized, as Thompson and the New Left proposed, because it was the idea that had created the despotism in the first place.

The claim that the "Promethean" idea of the Left had led directly to the socialist debacle depended on making two historical connections—between Marxism and Leninism, and between Leninism and Stalinism—thus establishing the continuity of the radical fate. This, hardly anyone on the Left could stomach. A reviewer in *Dissent* called Kolakowski "unfair to Marx." Michael Harrington took a similar position in his review in the *New Republic*. The response of our own mutual friend and close comrade, the English New Leftist Ralph Miliband, was one of even greater contempt:

> To speak of Stalinism as following naturally and ineluctably from Leninism is unwarranted. However, to speak of Stalinism as "one possible interpretation of Marx's doctrine" is not only unwarranted but false.

A decade has passed since Miliband wrote this. In the East it is the era of *glasnost*, the silence of the past is broken, the lies exposed, and the Soviets themselves now acknowledge the genesis of Stalinism in Lenin. But it is the causal link between Marxism and Stalinism that is the real issue, encompassing both.

Stalinism is not a possible interpretation of Marx's doctrine. What could Miliband (and the rest of you) have been thinking to have blotted out so much of the world we know? Forget the Soviet planners and managers who were the architects of the Stalinist empire and found a precedent and rationale in Marx for all their actions and social constructions, including the party dictatorship and the political police, the collectivization and the terror, the show trials and the gulag. These, after all, were practical men. Consider instead the intellectuals who managed to be Marxists *and* Stalinists through all these nightmares of the socialist epoch: Althusser and Brecht, Lukács and Gramsci, Bloch and Benjamin, Hobsbawm and Thompson, too. Subtle Hegelians and social progressives, they were all promoters of the Stalinist cancer, devoting their formidable intellects and talents to its metastatic growth. Were they illiterate to consider themselves Marxists *and* Stalinists? And what of the tens of thousands of

* *Main Currents of Marxism*, Oxford University Press (1978).

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party intellectuals all over the world, among them Nobel-prizewinning scientists and renowned artists, who saw no particular difficulty in assimilating Stalin's gulag to Marx's utopia, socialist humanism to the Soviet state?

The truth is that Stalinism was not just one *possible* interpretation of Marxism. In the recorded history of left-wing revolutionary movements it was undoubtedly the prevailing interpretation—of all the interpretations of Marx's doctrine since the *Communist Manifesto*, the one adhered to by the most people for the longest time. Maoism, Castroism, Vietnamese Communism, etc., the ideologies of the actually existing Marxist states—*these* make up the category of Stalinist Marxisms.

This truth leftist intellectuals like you are determined to avoid: the record of the real lives of real human beings, whose task is not just to interpret texts but to move people and to govern them. When Marxism has been put into practice by real historical actors, it has invariably taken a Stalinist form, producing the worst tyrannies and oppressions that mankind has ever known.

I ASK again, then: what persuaded us to believe (as you still do) that socialism, having begun everywhere so badly, nevertheless possessed the power to reform itself into something better? To be something other than it had been? To pass through the purgatory of its Stalinist tragedies and become the paradise of our imaginations?

The lineage of this belief could be traced back to the original anti-Stalinist: Trotsky. The legendary Trotsky defied Stalin's tyranny in the name of the revolution and, refusing to give up his principles, gave up his power instead. While the Father of the Peoples was slaughtering millions in the 1930's, Trotsky waited in his Mexican exile for Russia's proletariat to rise up against its new masters and restore the revolution to its rightful path. But as the waves of the opposition disappeared into the gulag, and the prospect of rebellion became impossibly remote, even Trotsky began to waver in his faith.

By the eve of World War II, Trotsky's despair had grown to such insupportable dimensions that he made a final wager. He declared that the cataclysm the world had just entered would be a test for the socialist faith. If the great war did not lead to a new revolution, socialists would be compelled to admit their defeat—that "the present USSR was the precursor of a new and universal system of exploitation," and that the socialist program had "petered out as a utopia." Trotsky did not survive to see the coming of peace and the unraveling of his Marxist dreams. In 1940, his personal dilemma was resolved when one of Stalin's agents gained entrance to the fortress of his exile in Mexico, and buried an ice pick in his head.

But Trotsky's fantasy survived. In 1953, Stalin died. When his passing led to a period of "de-Stalinization," a new generation on the Left convinced itself that the long-awaited metamorphosis was at last taking place. With Stalin's death came the Khrushchev thaw, the famous speech lifting the veil on the bloody past, and a relaxation of the terror. To those on the Left who had refused to give up, these were signs that the Stalinist caterpillar, having lodged itself in the cocoon of a backward empire, was at last becoming the socialist butterfly of which they had dreamed.

You and I and all our comrades of the New Left had our own legend to explain this transformation. It came from Isaac Deutscher, who had emerged from the prewar battles over Trotskyism to become the foremost interpreter of the Russian Revolution to our radical generation.

Deutscher's analysis began with the reality that was given to us: the fact of Stalinism. But instead of despairing like his mentor Trotsky, Deutscher explained why Stalinism, in spite of itself, was being transformed into socialism. In Trotsky's own theories Deutscher had found an answer to Trotsky's pessimism. While Trotsky had worried that there would be no revolution from below, Deutscher showed us why it was coming from above.

Stalinism, Deutscher wrote, was "an amalgamation of Marxism with the semi-barbarous and quite barbarous traditions and the primitive magic of an essentially pre-industrial . . . society." In short, Stalinism was the fulfillment of Lenin's famous prescription: *with barbarism we will drive barbarism out of Russia.* "By fostering Russia's industrialization and modernization Stalinism had with its own hands uprooted itself and prepared its 'withering away.'"

As Deutscher saw it, the backwardness of Russian society had provided the Bolsheviks not only with a revolutionary opportunity, but also with a historical advantage. They could avail themselves of modern technologies and social theories. Instead of relying on the anarchic impulses of capitalist investment, they could employ the superior methods of socialist planning. The result would be a modern economy more efficient and productive than those of their capitalist competitors. Wrote Deutscher:

> Superior efficiency necessarily translates itself, albeit with a delay, into higher standards of living. These should lead to the softening of social tensions, the weakening of antagonisms between bureaucracy and workers, and workers and peasants, to the further lessening of terror, and to the further growth of civil liberties.

Deutscher wrote these words in 1957, the year in which the Soviets celebrated the 40th anniversary of the revolution by launching the first man into space. The feat exemplified the progress that had been achieved in a single generation and heralded the approaching end of the Soviets' technological "apprenticeship" to the West.

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DEUTSCHER's intoxcating mix of optimism and "realism" became the foundation of our political revival. The turn Marxism had taken in 1917, creating a socialist economy within a totalitarian state, had posed a seemingly insoluble riddle. How could socialist progress be reconciled with such a stark retreat into social darkness? What had happened to Marx's insight that the productive mode determined the architecture of social relations? Building on Trotsky's analysis, Deutscher showed the only way out of the dilemma that would preserve our radical faith.

And no doubt that is why, thirty years later, even as the tremors of *glasnost* and *perestroika* were unhinging the equilibrium of the Communist empire, Ralph Miliband returned—with, I hear, your enthusiastic approval—to Deutscher's prophecy as a revolutionary premise. "Much that is happening in the Soviet Union," Miliband wrote last year, "constitutes a remarkable vindication of [Deutscher's] confidence that powerful forces for progressive change would eventually break through seemingly impenetrable barriers."

Yet to describe the collapse of the Soviet empire as a vindication of Deutscher's prophecies (and thus of the Marxist tradition that underpins them) is to turn history on its head. We are indeed witnessing a form of "revolution from above" in the Soviet Union, but it is a revolution that refutes Deutscher and Marx. The events of the past year are not a triumph for socialism, but a disaster.

Seduced by Soviet advances in nuclear arms and military showpieces like Sputnik, Deutscher had labored under the illusion of generations of the Left—that the goal of revolutionary power was something other than power itself. For years the Left had decried the collusion between corporate and military interests in the capitalist West, while all that time the *entire* socialist economy was little more than one giant military-industrial complex. By the 1980's, military investment absorbed 25 percent of the Soviet gross product (compared to only 6 percent in the United States) while military technology provided the only Soviet product competitive for export. Outside the military sector, as *glasnost* revealed, the vaunted Soviet industrial achievement was little more than a socialist mirage—imitative, inefficient, and outmoded. Straitjacketed by its central plan, the socialist world had been unable to enter the "second industrial revolution" that began to unfold in countries outside the Soviet bloc after 1945. "We were among the last to understand that in the age of information sciences the most valuable asset is knowledge, springing from human imagination and creativity," Gorbachev complained in 1989. While capitalist nations (including recent third-world economies like South Korea) were soaring into the technological future, Russia and its satellites, caught in the contradictions of an archaic mode of production, were stagnating into a decade of zero growth, becoming economic anachronisms—what one analyst described as "a gigantic Soviet socialist rust belt."

This reality laid the groundwork for the historic developments of the last year. The rejection of the planned economy by the leaders of actually existing socialist society, the pathetic search for the elements of a rule of law (following the relentless crusades of the past against "bourgeois rights"), the humiliating admission that the military superpower is in all other respects a third-world nation, the incapacity of the socialist mode of production to enter the technological future, and the unseemly begging for the West's advanced technology—all this adds up to a declaration of socialism's utter bankruptcy and historic defeat. This bankruptcy is not only moral and political, as before, but now economic as well.

It is precisely this economic bankruptcy that Deutscher did not foresee, and that forecloses any possibility of a socialist revival. Through all of these post-Khrushchev decades, such a revival had been premised on the belief that abundance would eventually flow from the cornucopia of socialist planning and that economic abundance would then lead to political deliverance—the Deutscherian thesis. The present economic bankruptcy of the Soviet bloc puts this thesis finally to rest.

Nothing underlined this bankruptcy so starkly as the opening of a McDonald's fast-food outlet in Moscow about the time the East Germans were pulling down the Berlin Wall. The appearance of the Moscow McDonald's revealed the prosaic truth that lay behind the creation of the Wall and the bloody epoch that had almost ended. Its Soviet customers gathered in lines whose length exceeded those waiting outside Lenin's tomb, the altar of the revolution itself. Here, the capitalist genius for catering to the ordinary desires of ordinary people was spectacularly displayed, along with socialism's abiding unconcern for the ordinary needs of common humanity. McDonald's executives even found it necessary to purchase and manage their own special farm in Russia, because Soviet potatoes—the very staple of the people's diet—were too poor in quality and unreliable in supply. Conversely, the wages of the Soviet customers were so depressed that a hamburger and fries cost half a day's pay. And yet this most ordinary of pleasures—the bottom of the food chain in the capitalist West—was still such a luxury for Soviet consumers that it was worth a four-hour wait and a four-hour wage.

Of all the symbols for the epoch-making year, this was perhaps the most resonant for leftists of our generation. Impervious to the way the unobstructed market democratized wealth, the New Left had focused its social scorn precisely on those plebeian achievements of consumer capitalism which brought services and goods efficiently and cheaply to ordinary people. Indeed, perhaps the main theoretical contribution of our generation of New Left Marxists was an elaborate literature of cultural criticism made up of sneering com-

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mentaries on the "commodity fetishism" of bourgeois cultures and the "one-dimensional" humanity that commerce produced. For New Leftists, the leviathans of post-industrial alienation and oppression were precisely these "consumption-oriented" industries, like McDonald's, which offered inexpensive services to the working masses. (A sister chain, the Sizzler, even offered "all you can eat" menus that embraced a variety of meats, vegetables, fruits, and pastries virtually unknown in the Soviet bloc.)

Such mundane symbols of consumer capitalism revealed the real secret of the era that was now ending, the reason why the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall were necessary. In 1989, for two hours' labor at the minimum wage, an American worker could obtain, at a corner Sizzler, a feast more opulent, more nutritionally packed and gastronomically diverse than anything available to almost all the citizens of the socialist world (including the elite) at almost any price.

In the counterrevolutionary year 1989, on the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, a group of protesters raised a banner in Red Square that summed up an epoch: "Seventy Years on the Road to Nowhere." They had been "over into the future" and it didn't work.

This epic of human futility reached a poignant climax the same year, when the Soviet state formally decided to return the land it had taken from the peasants half a century before. The collectivization of agriculture in the 30's had been the very first pillar of the socialist plan and one of the bloodiest episodes of the revolutionary era. Armies were dispatched to the countryside to confiscate the property of its recalcitrant owners, conduct mass deportations to the Siberian gulag, liquidate the "kulaks," and herd the survivors into the collective farms of the Marxist future.

In the final class struggle, no method was considered too ruthless to midwife the new world from the old. "We are opposed by everything that has outlived the time set for it by history," wrote Maxim Gorky in the midst of battle: "This gives us the right to consider ourselves again in a state of civil war. The conclusion naturally follows that if the enemy does not surrender, he must be destroyed." The destruction of the class enemy—the most numerous and productive element of Soviet society at the time—was accomplished by massacres, by slow deaths in concentration camps, and by deliberately induced genocidal famine. In the end, over ten million people were killed, more than had died on all sides in World War I.

Before collectivization, Russia had been the "breadbasket of Europe," supplying 40 percent of the world's wheat exports in the bumper years 1909 and 1910. But socialism ended Russia's agrarian plenty and created permanent deficits—not merely the human deficit of those who perished because of Stalinist brutalities during the collectivization, but a deficit in grain that would never be brought to harvest because of the brutality inherent in the socialist idea. Half a century after the socialist future had been established in the countryside, the Soviet Union had become a net *importer* of grain, unable to produce enough food to feed its own population. And so, half a century after ten million people had been killed to "socialize the countryside," those who had expropriated the land were giving it back. (Soviet joke: What is socialism? The longest road from capitalism to capitalism.) Now the Soviet rulers themselves had begun to say that it had all been a horrible "mistake."

Of all the scenarios of the Communist *Götterdämmerung*, the actual denouement had been predicted by no one. Throughout history ruling classes invariably had held fast to the foundations of their power. They had not confessed their own bankruptcy, and then proceeded to dismantle the social systems sustaining their rule, as this one had. The reason for the anomaly was that the architects of the Soviet Union had indeed made a "mistake." The system did not work, not even in terms of sustaining the power of its ruling class.

The close of the Soviet drama was unpredicted because the very nature of the Soviet Union was without precedent. The crisis of the Soviet system was not so much a traditional crisis of legitimacy and rule, as it was the crisis of an *idea*—a monstrously wrong idea that had been artificially imposed on an entire society by an intellectual elite.

But if socialism was a "mistake," it was never merely innocent in the sense that its consequences could not have been foreseen. From the very beginning, before the first drop of blood had ever been spilled, the critics of socialism had warned that it would not work and that it would end in tyranny. Already in 1872, Marx's arch-rival in the First International, the anarchist Bakunin, described with penetrating acumen the political life of the future that Marx had in mind:

> This government will not content itself with administering and governing the masses politically, as all governments do today. It will also administer the masses economically, concentrating in the hands of the state the production and division of wealth, the cultivation of land. . . . All that will demand . . . the reign of *scientific intelligence*, the most aristocratic, despotic, arrogant, and elitist of all regimes. There will be a new class, a new hierarchy, . . . the world will be divided into a minority ruling in the name of knowledge, and an immense ignorant majority. And then, woe unto the mass of ignorant ones!

If a leading voice in Marx's own International could see with such clarity the oppressive implications of his revolutionary idea, there was no excuse for the generations of Marxists who promoted the idea even after it had been put into practice and the blood had begun to flow.

Yet so powerful was the socialist idea that even

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those on the Left who took their inspiration from Bakunin and later opposed the Communists could not bring themselves to defend the democratic societies of the capitalist West that the Marxists had put under siege. Like Bakunin, they were sworn enemies of capitalism, the only industrial system that worked. Yet their remedy for its deficiencies—abolishing private property and the free market—would have meant generalized poverty and revolutionary terror as surely as the statist fantasies of Marx. By promoting the socialist idea of the future and by participating in the war against the capitalist present, these non-Marxist soldiers of the Left became partners in the very tragedy they feared.

Of all Marx's critics, it was only the partisans of capitalism like Ludwig Von Mises and Friedrich Hayek who understood the mistake that socialists had made and thus appreciated the only practical—which is to say the real—social bases of human freedom: private property and free markets. In 1922, as the Bolsheviks completed the consolidation of their political power, Von Mises published his classic indictment of the socialist idea and its destructive consequences. "The problem of economic calculation," he wrote, "is the fundamental problem of socialism" and cannot be solved by socialist means. "Everything brought forward in favor of socialism during the last hundred years, . . . all the blood which has been spilled by the supporters of socialism, cannot make socialism workable." Across the vast empire of societies that have put the socialist idea to the test, the names of Von Mises, Hayek, and the other prophets of capitalist economy are now revered, even as the names of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky are despised. Yet in the socialist and Marxist press in the West, the arguments of the capitalist critics of socialism, who long ago demonstrated its impossibility and who have now been proven correct, are nowhere considered. It is as if they were never made.

For socialists like you to confront these arguments would be to confront the lesson that (to say yet again what cannot be said too often) the socialist idea has been, in its consequences, one of the worst and most destructive fantasies ever to have taken hold of the minds of men. And it *is* the idea that Marx conceived. For (to repeat another point that cannot be repeated too often), the Promethean project of the Left has been just this from the first minute: to abolish property and overthrow the market and thereby to establish the reign of reason and justice embodied in a social plan.

TOWARD the end of his life, Isaac Deutscher had a premonition of the disaster that has now overtaken the socialist Left. In the conclusion to his three-volume biography of Trotsky, he speculated on the fate that would befall his revolutionary hero if the socialist project itself should fail:

> If the view were to be taken that all that the Bolsheviks aimed at—socialism—was no more than a *fata morgana*, that the revolution merely substituted one kind of exploitation and oppression for another, and could not do otherwise, then Trotsky would appear as the high priest of a god that was bound to fail, as utopia's servant mortally entangled in his dreams and illusions.

But Deutscher did not have the strength to see the true dimensions of the catastrophe that socialism had in store. Instead, his realism only served to reveal the depths of self-delusion and self-justifying romanticism that provide sustenance for the Left. Even if such a failure were to take place, he went on to argue, the revolutionary hero

> would [still] attract the respect and sympathy due to the great utopians and visionaries. . . . Even if it were true that it is man's fate to stagger in pain and blood from defeat to defeat and to throw off one yoke only to bend his neck beneath another—even then man's longings for a different destiny would still, like pillars of fire, relieve the darkness and gloom of the endless desert through which he has been wandering with no promised land beyond.

This is the true self-vision of the Left: an army of saints on the march against injustice, lacking itself the capacity for evil. The Left sees its revolutions as pillars of fire that light up humanity's deserts, but burn no civilizations as they pass.

Yet consider: if no one had believed Marx's idea, there would have been no Bolshevik Revolution. Russia might then have evolved into a modern democracy and industrial state. Hitler would not have come to power. There would have been no cold war. It is hard not to conclude that most of the bloodshed of the 20th century might not have taken place.

The Communist idea is not "the principle of the modern world," as Marx supposed, but its anti-principle, the reactionary rejection of political individualism and the market economies of the liberal West. Wherever the revolutionary Left has triumphed, its triumph has meant not progress but economic backwardness and social poverty, cultural deprivation and the loss of political freedom for all the unfortunate peoples in its path.

By promoting the socialist idea, the realization of which required so much death and suffering to implement, and then did not work in the end, you and I have earned ourselves a share, however modest, in the responsibility for its crimes. And it is these crimes that are the real legacy of the Left of which I was, and you so tragically still are, a part.

YOUR EX-COMRADE,
DAVID

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How They Teach the Holocaust

Lucy S. Dawidowicz

A SCANDAL erupted in 1988 when the United States Department of Education rejected an application for a $70,000 grant to disseminate *Facing History and Ourselves,* a privately-produced curriculum to teach junior-high-school students about the Holocaust. It seems that an outside reviewer for the department had criticized the curriculum for failing to present the viewpoints of the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. Though the department denied that its decision had been determined by the outside reviewer—or, as the curriculum's supporters charged, by the negative opinion of the conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly—Congressman Ted Weiss (New York) invoked his status as the son of Jewish refugees from Nazism to air the matter before his congressional subcommittee. After hearing testimony from the author of *Facing History,* who was also the executive director of the foundation distributing it, the subcommittee concluded that "the peer-review process had been subverted by opponents of Holocaust education."

During the ensuing controversy, in which charges of right-wing conspiracy and anti-Semitic intent were hurled at the Department of Education, the editor of an educational newsletter invited me to write a piece defending *Facing History.* I never did so, for my own reading of the curriculum persuaded me that the Department of Education had ample reason to turn down the grant application. Putatively a curriculum to teach the Holocaust, *Facing History* was also a vehicle for instructing thirteen-year-olds in civil disobedience and indoctrinating them with propaganda for nuclear disarmament.

My unexpected finding shocked me and aroused my curiosity. How, in fact, *was* the history of the murder of the European Jews being handled in secondary schools in the United States? The decentralized nature of the American educational system makes it very difficult to find out in exactly how many districts the subject is taught, what precisely is taught, for how long a period, or with what effect. What we do know is that, for an event of such historical magnitude and moral import, the Holocaust as a subject has yet to earn a full place in secondary-school education.

Of course, history itself is under general beleaguerment in the secondary schools. A 1988 survey by the Bradley Commission found that at least half the students in elementary and secondary schools do not study any world history or Western civilization at all. Today, fewer than twenty states require more than the usual one year of American history for graduation. Instead of history, most schools now offer a subject called "global studies" or "world civilizations," an omnium-gatherum of pop anthropology, sociology, geography, history, and art appreciation, characterized by one historian as a "globe-trotting survey of dozens of societies on every continent."

History is also being squeezed out to make room for subject matter demanded by special-interest groups. Blacks have called for teaching about the role of blacks in American history and culture, and Hispanics, Native Americans, and women have followed suit, giving rise to what has irreverently been labeled "oppression studies." The original psychological rationale for these studies—that they would foster pupils' self-esteem—has now been superseded by an ideological rationale which preaches the equality of all cultures and attacks the "hegemony" of Western civilization and its "Eurocentric" character. In either case, the time and space that could be devoted to studying the murder of the European Jews shrink even more. And lobbying efforts by Holocaust survivors, which intentionally or not often reinforce the impression that the Holocaust is nothing more than the Jewish branch of oppression studies, cannot always compete with other more fashionable or better organized "causes."

There has also been outright opposition to teaching about the murder of the European Jews. Back in 1977, when the New York City Board of Education introduced its own curriculum for a mandatory unit called *The Holocaust: A Study of Genocide,* M.T. Mehdi, head of the American Arab Relations Committee, decried it as "an attempt by the Zionists to use the city educational system for their evil propaganda purposes." The president of the German-American Committee for Greater New York said, "it creates a bad atmos-

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phere toward German-Americans in this country" and added that "there is no real proof that the Holocaust actually did happen." The New York Association of Black Educators objected on the grounds that the topic was irrelevant to black students. In Philadelphia, where preparations were under way to introduce a similar course, a Lutheran minister worried that the schools were not teaching other instances of genocide; besides, the Holocaust curriculum made it appear "that genocide was a Teutonic phenomenon." Early this year, parents of a student in a suburban Chicago junior high school protested against such instruction on the ground that the Holocaust was a "myth."

STILL, despite indifference and opposition, the history of the murder of the European Jews *is* gradually being given some place in the secondary-school curriculum. As far as I have been able to ascertain, it is now incorporated in the "Global Studies" and/or "World Cultures" courses of at least seven state education departments (California, Connecticut, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania), and in the curricula of many large-city boards of education (Atlanta, Baltimore, Des Moines, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh) and of many dozens, perhaps even hundreds, of local boards, mostly in suburban communities of large cities. Studied in the context of totalitarianism in Europe (Nazism, fascism, and Communism) and of World War II, and sometimes also as part of the American-history curriculum for the period, the subject is commonly offered in grade ten (age 15), occasionally in grade eleven. Some schools teach the subject as early as middle-school grades eight and nine (ages 13 and 14).

The teaching unit ranges from two to ten periods, or longer if student interest warrants. In New York State, where instruction is mandatory, the Regents high-school examinations in Global Studies (formerly Social Studies) and in American History, which students are required to pass for graduation, regularly include one question on the subject.

Most school boards or departments of education produce their own curricula, which develop material briefly sketched in world-history textbooks. (These days the textbooks adopted by major school systems usually contain a couple of pages about the Holocaust, though the information may not always be coherent or even correct.) Course outlines are organized into teaching units, supplemented with teaching aids, and fleshed out with reading materials consisting largely of bowdlerized borrowings from books, magazines, and newspapers. Curricula produced for use in individual schools are usually little more than a batch of mimeographed pages stapled together, while big-city or statewide curricula are more elaborate products of committees, consultants, review boards, graphic designers, and printing presses.*

School districts sometimes provide training programs to familiarize their teachers with the new course material. Schools and teachers can also avail themselves of outside resources. Social Studies School Service, a commercial company, distributes a "World History" catalogue with five pages of listings of books and videocassettes on Hitler, Nazism, the Holocaust, and genocide—twice as many as those on the French Revolution. The company also issues a 32-page catalogue, *Teaching the Holocaust: Resources and Materials,* a macabre cornucopia of books at all grade levels, curricula, teaching guides, atlases, charts, videocassettes, sound filmstrips, photo aids, posters, simulation games, crossword puzzles, cartoon assignments, and quizzes.

Teachers can also make use of Jewish institutional resources. According to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council in Washington, there are no fewer than 19 Holocaust museums in the United States, 48 resource centers, 34 archival facilities, 12 memorials, and 26 research institutes.

THE 25 curricula I have examined undertake to do two things: first, to give pupils basic information and, second, to provide appropriate moral education. They are better at the first task than at the second, and better at describing what happened than explaining why it happened.

Most curricula plunge right into the story of Hitler's Germany; a few provide some background on the Weimar Republic, presumably to explain Hitler's rise to power. Though all curricula discuss Nazi anti-Semitism, preferring generic terms like "racism" and "prejudice" instead of the specific "anti-Semitism," 15 of the 25 never even suggest that anti-Semitism had a history *before* Hitler. Of those that do, barely a handful present coherent historical accounts, however brief.

A small number of curricula include lessons which survey the pre-Nazi history of Jews in Europe, presumably to humanize the image of the Jews depicted in Nazi propaganda. In schools with a considerable Jewish population, these lessons may function also as homage to a destroyed community and culture.

Some readings, like those in the New York State curriculum, are informative and stimulating. Others, like the New Jersey *Student Anthology,* are overloaded with junk items from popular culture. With few exceptions, the English language is mutilated in most curricula and errors turn up everywhere—errors grammatical as well as typographical, misspellings of names, wrong titles, sloppy mistakes—which reflect prevailing educational standards.

* As a basis for this article I have collected 25 curricula, itemized in a Note beginning on p. 31.

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Nor are errors of basic fact and interpretation all that uncommon. Thus, the California *History-Social Science Framework* seeks "to engage students in thinking about why one of the world's most civilized nations participated in the systematic murder of millions of innocent people, mainly because of their religious identity." One would have thought that by now educators would know the Nazis determined who was a Jew not by religion, but by the spurious criterion of "race." A more egregious distortion of fact appears in the New York City Board of Education curriculum, *The Holocaust*, of 1988 (not the same as the more substantial curriculum which the Board issued in 1979). Two short excerpts from Hitler's *Mein Kampf* are presented "to show that racist hatred extends to all groups that are 'others.'" The first sets forth Hitler's ideas on the mental inferiority of blacks, but omits from the quoted passage a key sentence in which Hitler asserts that only Jews regard blacks as equals of whites. The second excerpt is one of Hitler's more benign statements about the Jews—that they lack their own culture. The curriculum thereby makes a travesty of Hitler's views, creating the impression that blacks and not Jews were his primary targets.

A grave error of omission occurs in those curricula which include a lesson on "World Responses" or "Resistance, Rescue, and Intervention," where the United States is routinely charged with indifference to the fate of the Jews during the war or accused of "doing nothing" to help them. These curricula never mention that the United States committed enormous resources of men and material to fight the Germans, and that only the American military presence made possible the defeat and collapse of the Nazi dictatorship. No curriculum cites the belief of U.S. government and military officials that the only way to stop the murder of the Jews was to defeat Hitler on the battlefield. Nor does any curriculum connect the inability of the Allies to accomplish that task sooner with the rapid disarmament of the 1920's and 1930's. By such omissions, these curricula fail properly to place the events of the Holocaust in the context of World War II.

As for the teaching of moral lessons, all the curricula come to pretty much the same general conclusion, with the variations among them apparent only in their rhetoric. Santayana's words, that "[t]hose who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," are widely quoted, or misquoted. A cruder version of the same idea turns up as: "So that it will never happen again." Most curricula also aim (in the words of one) "to teach students the inevitable consequences of hatred, prejudice, bigotry, and scapegoating." They try to instill respect for racial, religious, and cultural differences, and to foster a commitment to democratic values. A bare handful discuss the sanctity of human life (the Michigan/Bolkosky curriculum is a heartening example). Most focus on "individual responsibility" as against "obedience to authority" as keys to moral behavior.

Besides lectures, readings, films, and discussions, most of the curricula use simulation games and/or role-playing to teach their moral lessons. Students play Gestapo, concentration camp, and Nuremberg Trial. They act out the roles of murderers, victims, judges. These exercises have been known to produce unprecedented emotional tensions in the classroom, among some students arousing fear, panic, and overidentification with Jewish victims and, among others, releasing sadomasochistic urges, violent responses, and overidentification with the murderers.

The testimony of classroom experience is too fragmentary and subjective to allow judgments about how any particular curriculum translates into effective classroom teaching. But the texts themselves reveal their shortcomings. Though most recite the facts, they do not stress the centrality of premeditated mass murder as an instrument of policy. But the more serious failure, to which I have already alluded, is the omission of the history of anti-Semitism—and especially its roots in Christian doctrine—as necessary background to the murder of the European Jews. To be sure, Christianity cannot be held responsible for Hitler, but the Nazis would not have succeeded in disseminating their brand of racist anti-Semitism had they not been confident of the pervasiveness, firmness, and durability of Christian hatred of Jews. Anti-Semitism, in the words of the late Ben Halpern, is "the name of a cumulative *tradition* of hostility."

Trying to teach adolescents about the roots of anti-Semitism in Christianity, however, even in the secular schools of a secular state, is like leading a tourist party across crocodile territory. How do teachers who may themselves be believing Christians explain this history to children from observant Christian homes? How will parents react when their children tell them what they have learned about Christian persecution of the Jews? Clearly a desire not to offend is the reason most curricula detour around the subject. The Pennsylvania/Grobman curriculum, which does include an excellent lesson on the history of Christian anti-Semitism, cautions that "some students (and some teachers as well) may have difficulty accepting the injustices which have occurred during the centuries in the name of religion, particularly if that religion is their own." The New Jersey curriculum takes the problem directly into the classroom for discussion: "Many people feel that a crucial part of growth is our response to uncomfortable new knowledge about things we cherish. How do you respond to the charge that organized Christianity might have played a major role in the historic mistreatment of Jews?"

Is it at all possible to improve instruction on this painful subject? In the first two decades after

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the war, Catholics and Protestants alike, horror-struck and guilt-ridden by the terrible evidence of the murder of the six million, acknowledged that their church teachings had provided the bedrock of anti-Semitism. Some institutions took steps to excise what Jews called the "doctrine of contempt" in church teachings. Liberal Protestant groups renounced proselytism and accepted Judaism as an equal sister religion. But the most dramatic and radical breakthrough came when the Catholic Church, after a long and bitter debate during the Second Vatican Council in the years 1962-65, removed the charge of "deicide" from ancient and modern Jews. In those days there was also much discussion about revising the textbooks used in Catholic parochial and Protestant denominational schools.

Now, more than a generation later, it appears that those post-World War II teachings have not filtered down with equal effectiveness to local churches and parishes. The fundamental question still remains of whether it is at all possible to eradicate anti-Semitism from Christian teaching without, as the radical theologian Rosemary Ruether has written, "destroying the whole structure." In any case, Christian remorse over the murder of European Jews has long since dissipated. Not only is the old hatred of the Jews still to be found in fundamental Christian texts, but new layers of anti-Semitism have accreted, as hatred of Jews now disguises itself in anti-Zionist rhetoric and anti-Israel propaganda. These days liberal Christians rarely respond to expressions of anti-Semitism, no matter how irrational or ugly.

One wonders whether any Christian educators, scholars, and theologians would be willing to try to solve this problem. It would be a daunting task to create a teaching guide for a short series of lessons about the history of Christian anti-Semitism for use in a Holocaust curriculum and to do so without suppressing the facts, without hypocrisy, and yet preserving the integrity of Christian faith and its doctrines.

Omitting all references to Christian anti-Semitism is one way some curricula avoid the sensitivities of the subject. The more acceptable and common pedagogic strategy is to generalize the highly particular nature and history of anti-Semitism by subsuming (and camouflaging) it under general rubrics like scapegoating, prejudice, and bigotry. (As Sir Francis Bacon noted nearly 400 years ago, "the spacious liberty of generalities" has always been more appealing than "the inclosures of particularity.")

The concept of scapegoating is easy to transmit. Every child is familiar with the experience, whether as victim or as victimizer, and knows how easy it is to heap blame on an innocent and helpless creature for whatever has gone wrong. A variation on the scapegoat theory appears in *Facing History*, which explains that "hatred of Jews invariably reflects larger crises in society which directly affect the lives of all," and that "the resurgence of anti-Semitism points to a resurgence of other forms of intolerance and hatred." These abstract words suggest that hatred of the Jews is not a thing in itself, but a symptom of "larger" troubles, though no explanation is given as to why the Jews, rather than dervishes, for instance, are consistently chosen as the scapegoat.

The curricula similarly resort to the concept of prejudice, a generic term for hostile prejudgments of people and groups. Some curricula, determined to teach the irrationality of prejudice, even invent the notion of arbitrary prejudice, directed, for example, against left-handed or red-haired people. A common classroom activity involves singling out children with specific characteristics like blue eyes or long hair and then having the whole class act out nasty forms of prejudiced behavior against them. The trouble with this kind of universalization is that it once again ignores the particular religious and historical roots that nurture specific prejudices. It certainly does not explain the distinctive character and history of anti-Semitism.

In studying prejudice or any other generic substitute for anti-Semitism, most curricula focus on individual attitudes, beliefs, and opinions rather than their embodiment in public policy and law. This approach conceives of prejudice as a psychological or mental-health problem, a disease that can be cured: if only every bigot could be put on the analyst's couch, prejudice would be eliminated from society. The failure to distinguish between individual behavior and state policies may be attributable to the relatively benign American experience of anti-Semitism, which, with few exceptions, has been a history of individual prejudices expressed through words and acts in the private sector of society. Yet anti-Semitism as public policy is an essential aspect of what the Holocaust was about, and it too has a history. Whenever anti-Semitism has become the instrument of authority, and been incorporated in the very structure of government, Jews have been deprived of their rights, their property, and ultimately their lives. It happened when the medieval Church agitated the faithful against Jews during the Crusades; it happened when modern European nation-states denied Jews their equal rights and citizenship; it manifested itself in the anti-Semitic goals and platforms of political parties in 19th- and 20th-century European countries and in the enactment of anti-Jewish legislation.

Curricula commonly ask their student whether "it" could happen here and even give their own answer: yes, it could happen here. But these curricula do not instruct their students in the fundamental differences between, on the one side, our pluralist democracy and constitutional government, ruled by law, and, on the other side, the authoritarian or totalitarian governments of Europe that legitimated discrimination against and

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persecution of Jews. One wonders whether students learn about those fundamental differences *anywhere* in their high-school education

THERE is still another way of deemphasizing the role of anti-Semitism in the murder of the Jews—by categorizing this particular crime as an act of genocide, a crime which can be committed against any people, nation, or race. Both the concept and the word (combining the Greek *genos*, meaning "race" or "descent," and a Latin suffix, meaning "kill" or "slay") were invented by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew, most of whose family was murdered in Warsaw by the Germans during the war. Lemkin wanted the word to become a generic term that would define a crime in international law, and indeed as such it was encoded in the Genocide Convention which the United Nations adopted in 1949.

The concept of genocide—an act "committed with intent to destroy . . . a national, ethnical, racial or religious group"—has since become widely debased, and today groups of all sorts clamor for recognition as victims of genocide. Browsing among the curricula, I found few setting any qualifications for eligibility. Thus, the Cleveland Heights, Ohio, World History curriculum enumerates as victims "of 20th-century genocide . . . the Ibos, the Armenians, and the Indonesian Chinese." The New Jersey curriculum encourages students "to probe the concept of genocide," and cites as one historical example "the plight of the contemporary 'boat people.' " The authors of the Connecticut curriculum, altogether altering the original meaning, define genocide as "all official actions *to harm*, in whole or in part, various types of human groups" (emphasis added). According to the Connecticut curriculum, victims of genocide include North American Indians, South and Central American Indians, and the aboriginal peoples in Australia. This curriculum, which bears the imprimatur of the state's Commissioner of Education, also accuses "Americans" of having committed genocide, asserting that the American "army sometimes deliberately spread smallpox" among the Indians.

These far-fetched instances surely reflect in some cases the attitudes of the "hate-America" crowd, but they are used also as a pedagogical device. By enumerating supposedly analogous cases, the curricula can make the issue "relevant" by deflecting attention from the Jews as the sole or most prominent victims of genocide. The New York City curriculum of 1979, for instance, copes with the problem by having it both ways. In an early chapter it lists, in addition to the murder of the Jews, four other examples of imputed genocide: (1) the treatment of American Indians; (2) the treatment of blacks during the slave era in the United States; (3) the slaughter and deportations of the Armenian people by the Turks; and (4) the reported murders of tens of thousands of Ugandans who opposed Idi Amin's dictatorship during the 1970's. Then in a later chapter the authors reverse themselves and at last make a crucial distinction: "While there have been many instances of genocide . . . , the total annihilation of a people was not an officially sanctioned purpose of a national government as it was in Nazi Germany." By this standard, only the slaughter of the Armenians possibly qualifies as an example of genocide comparable to the Holocaust.

Besides accumulating such imprecise and often tendentious analogies, some curricula enlarge the list of victims of Nazi genocide to include those whom the Nazis never intended to wipe out. The Pennsylvania/Grobman curriculum is one of several which instance homosexuals and members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, though there is no historical evidence that the Nazis ever planned to exterminate these as groups. To be sure, the Nazis put homosexuals in concentration camps and identified them with pink triangles, proposing to "reeducate" them to function in "normal" society. And Jehovah's Witnesses (*Bibelforscher* in Germany), who refused to recognize the authority of the Nazi state, were likewise sent to concentration camps (and identified by purple triangles) for a term limited to two months. Both groups were incarcerated together with other categories of prisoners whom the Germans did not intend to murder: criminals (green triangle); anti-socials—beggars, vagrants, prostitutes, and the like (black triangle); and political prisoners (red triangle). Many of these inmates, including the Jehovah's Witnesses and homosexuals, unable to withstand the hardships of forced labor, became ill and died for lack of medical care. Moreover, as the war progressed, the camp regimen became ever more brutal, and non-Jewish inmates too weak or ill to work were routinely sent to their deaths. But none of this was part of a Nazi program to eliminate the group in question.

The lack of precision in the curricula may reflect the imprecision in the text of the Genocide Convention itself. Though it was designed to prevent and punish the crime of murder of a whole people, such as was committed against the Jews, the Convention does not once use the word "murder." "Killing" is the operative word. Nor is the word "murder" used with much frequency in the curricula. The more commonly invoked words tend to be abstractions—destruction, annihilation, extermination, and, of course, genocide. Though many curricula include a lesson on the Nuremberg trials in which they discuss crimes against humanity, they hardly ever discuss the crime of murder. Why?

Since the beginning of time, murder with malice aforethought has been outlawed and punished by every people and state, damned by every religion, forever unredeemed and unredeemable. Yet despite the clear understandings handed down from ancient cultures and incorporated in modern

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law, many people today embrace a relativistic attitude toward murder. Some denounce capital punishment for the crime of murder as if the penalty itself were murder. Others insist that instead of rushing to condemn we should seek out the "root causes" in our social system that lead murderers to commit their crimes. It seems to follow, then, that we should convict "society" instead. This moral climate may account for a serious lapse in most Holocaust curricula—the failure to impart any moral lesson about the specific crime of murder, in this case mass murder.

As FOR the moral lessons in which the Holocaust curricula *do* abound, these are often inappropriate to the subject.

A few curricula offer exercises in outright political indoctrination in currently fashionable causes. Thus, the New Jersey *Student Anthology* ingeniously applies the history of the Holocaust to "the American civil-rights movement and other social-action groups" and, going even further afield, to "the experiences of Maryknolls in El Salvador," all of which "raise old questions about how we should respond to new oppression." Needless to say, the curriculum does not spell out just how the history of the Holocaust applies to these movements.

In the Pennsylvania/Grobman curriculum, a lesson entitled "Nazi Fascism and the Modern Totalitarian State" assigns the students to "research the value of war toys sold annually in the United States" and to "discuss if this says anything about our culture." Another activity in the same lesson asks students to find out if there are local facilities "which provide land for 'war games.' " These classroom activities reflect the influence of the "peace-education" movement which successfully penetrated the school curriculum in the 1980's.*

The most blatant example of that influence appears in *Facing History*'s last chapter, "Facing Today and the Future." Claiming that "continued adult denial of the information regarding potential nuclear annihilation is harmful to our students," *Facing History* finds a parallel between the Holocaust and a "potential nuclear holocaust" in that "the explanations educators give for perpetuating the silence about nuclear issues are the same as those given for avoiding a confrontation with the Holocaust." At chapter's end, the authors disclose their activist agenda by offering to make available to teachers and students a list of groups dealing with "issues of the nuclear world of today."

But the lesson most frequently taught by these curricula is political in a more indirect way. It centers on the theme of moral choice, the obligation of each person to be responsible for his own actions. Usually the curricula pose the problem in either/or terms: conforming (which is immoral) or resisting (moral), obeying authority (bad) or following the dictates of one's conscience (good). The standard examples are two famous court cases in which the defendant invoked "superior orders": Adolf Eichmann at his trial in Jerusalem in 1961 and Lt. William L. Calley at his court-martial for having shot to death unarmed Vietnamese civilians at My Lai in 1968.

In citing the "superior-orders" defense, however, the curricula erect a man of straw. This defense was specifically repudiated in Article 8 of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal of August 8, 1945, which the Allied governments created to try the major Nazi war criminals. Rejected in international law, it was denied at both Eichmann's and Calley's trials. The curricula which refer to those cases have confused the discredited legal argument of obedience to superior orders with the concept of obedience as a trait of character. Eichmann claimed he was merely an obedient officer performing his duty, and the authors of *Facing History* take him at his word, believing, along with Hannah Arendt, that he was a faceless example of the "banality of evil." But Eichmann was in fact a fanatically committed Nazi, zealous in pursuit of Nazi goals, and enterprising in facilitating the murder of the Jews.

The longest chapter in *Facing History*, "Preparing for Obedience," which undertakes to teach its students that obedience and conformity are not morally admirable qualities, opens with the ominous statement that "obedience is one of the critical ingredients of a totalitarian society." But as anyone knows who has studied totalitarian societies, the critical ingredient of these societies is not obedience, but terror. It is terror that elicits obedience under duress, even to unjust laws.

According to a study guide for a film which *Facing History* and many other curricula include in their course, "[o]bedience to the law is not necessarily the determinant of a moral person." That message of moral relativism has reached the students using the curriculum; in the diary in which they are required to enter their reactions one of them wrote, "From the course I've learned that there is not just one right and one wrong answer." This is a message that might have been useful to students in prewar Germany, the most flagrantly authoritarian society in all the West. But do American children, who have been raised in unprecedented freedom and permissiveness, need to be instructed in the virtues of disobedience?

Some curricula teach that following one's "conscience" is morally superior to obeying one's parent or the just laws of society. None recommends that students read Plato's *Crito*, where they might come upon Socrates' refusal to accept his friends' plan to organize his escape from prison: "Do you imagine that a city can continue to exist

* See André Ryerson, "The Scandal of 'Peace Education,' " COMMENTARY, June 1986.

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and not be turned upside down, if the legal judgments which are pronounced in it have no force, but are nullified and destroyed by private persons?" Nor does any curriculum question the reliability of conscience as a guide to distinguishing between good and bad, right and wrong. The voice of conscience may sometimes sound loud and clear, but not necessarily at all times and under all circumstances. Furthermore, the consciences of different people within the same society or in different societies vary widely.

Conscience can be especially unreliable when it comes to moral questions which we have never before faced or imagined and for which we lack the wisdom to choose an honorable course of action. The Jews who lived under Hitler's rule were confronted with cruel dilemmas, forced to make difficult, even impossible, choices about matters of life and death for which conscience could offer no direction and the past could give no guidance. Yet many high-school curricula frivolously suggest role-playing exercises in which students imagine how they would behave if confronted with such dilemmas. What kind of answers can come from American children who think of the Gestapo as the name of a game?

If conscience is not a satisfactory guide to moral behavior in times of duress, and if one is compelled to live in a society with unjust laws, by what standard then should people be guided? My own answer is simple: we turn to a more authoritative law, to the fundamental moral code of our civilization and of the three great religions whose basic text is the Jewish Bible. We turn to the Sixth Commandment, which prescribes: "Thou shalt not murder." This, in my view, is *the* primary lesson of the Holocaust.

In the public schools, teaching moral standards as they are incorporated in the Ten Commandments (or even in just one commandment) would, so I am told, constitute a violation of the doctrine of the separation of church and state. If that is so, something is clearly wrong with both our system of education and our standards of morality.

The failure of American schools to teach effectively has become a national scandal. Surveys and studies continue to report that large numbers of pupils cannot read well enough to comprehend a simple text, that they cannot write a straight sentence, perform everyday arithmetical tasks, locate a foreign country on a map. Yet the unending flow of criticism does not mean that we should abandon the entire educational enterprise. Similarly, this disheartening survey of secondary-school Holocaust curricula is not intended to undermine the legitimacy of teaching about the murder of the European Jews. Of the curricula currently in use, two, each quite different in its treatment—Michigan/Bolkosky's *A Holocaust Curriculum: Life Unworthy of Life* and New York State's *Teaching About the Holocaust and Genocide*—are excellent. They, at least, can serve as the basis for reconsidering how this thorny subject can be taught with integrity and without political exploitation.

Note

The following list of curricula is arranged by states, but includes a separate listing for New York City. Staff members of the Anti-Defamation League helped me obtain some; others, collected by the Jewish Education Service of North America, are available at the Library of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City.

California: (1) California State Board of Education, *Model Curriculum for Human Rights and Genocide* (1988, 66 pp., printed). Sections of this curriculum have been excerpted from the Connecticut State Department of Education curriculum, *Human Rights: The Struggle for Freedom, Dignity, and Equality.* (2) California State Board of Education, *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (1988, 122 pp., printed) places the teaching of the Holocaust within grade ten. (3) Los Angeles Unified School District, Instructional Planning Division, *The Holocaust: An Instructional Guide* (1979, 67 pp.).

Connecticut: State of Connecticut, Department of Education, *Human Rights: The Struggle for Freedom, Dignity, and Equality* (1987, 90 pp.).

Georgia: Fulton County (Atlanta): (1) Riverwood High School, *Holocaust and Human Rights* (1989, 55 pp., processed). (2) Northside High School, *Study Unit on the Holocaust* (nd, 16 pp., processed), for grade seven.

Illinois: (1) Champaign Community Unit School District #4, *Middle School Holocaust Curriculum* (January 1990, 28 pp., processed), for grade eight. (2) Board of Education of the City of Chicago, *The Holocaust: A Teacher Resource Unit: Grade 8* (1990, 68 pp., processed). (3) Evanston, *Teachers' Guide to the Holocaust* (1977, 38 pp., processed).

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Iowa: Des Moines Independent Community School District and the Community Relations Commission of the Jewish Federation of Greater Des Moines, *A Study of the Holocaust* (2nd ed., 1984, processed); 2 vols.: *Teacher Guide* (19 pp.), *Student Handbook* (58 + 41 pp.).

Maryland: Baltimore, Baltimore City Public Schools, Office of Social Studies, *The Holocaust* (1979, 116 pp., processed).

Massachusetts: Margot Stern Strom and William S. Parsons, *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior* (Watertown, Mass.: Intentional Educations, 1982, 400 pp., printed, ill.). An eight-to-ten-week unit, for grades eight or nine. Privately produced for sale, nationally distributed.

Michigan: Sidney M. Bolkosky, Betty Rotberg Ellias, David Harris, *A Holocaust Curriculum: Life Unworthy of Life: An 18-Lesson Instructional Unit* (Farmington Hills, Mich., The Center for the Study of the Child, 1987). Consists of: *Instructor's Manual* (216 pp., printed, ill.), *Student Textbook* (318 pp., printed, ill., in looseleaf binder), and a 60-minute videotape of interviews with Holocaust survivors, boxed. Privately produced for sale, nationally distributed.

New Jersey: Richard F. Flaim and Edwin W. Reynolds, Jr., eds., *The Holocaust and Genocide: A Search for Conscience: A Curriculum Guide* (Vineland, N.J., Board of Education and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1983, 183 pp., processed). A six-unit curriculum. A companion volume, Harry Furman, ed., subtitled *A Student Anthology* (217 pp.), was "developed under the auspices of the State of New Jersey Department of Education." Both volumes bear the imprimatur of New Jersey's then Governor, Thomas H. Kean. Teaneck High School uses these materials in grade nine "World History" and "World Cultures Program."

New York State: The University of the State of New York, the State Education Department Bureau of Curriculum Development, *Teaching About the Holocaust and Genocide: The Human Rights Series* (1985-86, 3 vols., 66 pp., 323 pp., 166 pp., printed). A two-week course of study.

New York City: (1) Board of Education of the City of New York, Division of Curriculum and Instruction, *The Holocaust: A Study of Genocide* (1979, reprinted 1985, 587 pp., printed). May be used as a unit of two to five weeks and also for longer units and elective courses. (2) New York City Board of Education, Division of Curriculum and Instruction, Social Studies Unit, *The Holocaust* (1988, 66 pp., processed). A two-week unit. (3) Ira Zornberg, *Classroom Strategies for Teaching About the Holocaust: 10 Lessons for Classroom Use* (1983, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 91 pp., processed). Nationally distributed. (4) Karen Shawn, *The End of Innocence: Anne Frank and the Holocaust* (1989, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 102 pp., ill., printed). Nationally distributed. A five-lesson unit.

Ohio: (1) Leatrice B. Rabinsky and Carol Danks, eds., *The Holocaust: Prejudice Unleashed* (1989, State of Ohio, Materials and Curriculum Committee of the Ohio Council on Holocaust Education, printed, ill., nine individually paged and bound booklets assembled in a looseleaf binder and boxed). A ten-lesson unit. (2) Board of Education, Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, *Modern World History* (1979, 39 pp., processed). Includes an optional unit on the Holocaust.

Pennsylvania: (1) Gary Grobman, *The Holocaust: A Guide for Pennsylvania Teachers* (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Pennsylvania Jewish Coalition, 1990, 166 pp., printed). The Pennsylvania Department of Education has approved this curriculum for distribution free of charge to each school district in the state. (2) Philadelphia, Instructional Series of the School District of Philadelphia, *The Holocaust: A Teacher Resource* (1977, 129 pp., printed). (3) Mt. Lebanon (Pittsburgh) School District, nine untitled pages on teaching the Holocaust in required social-studies courses, grades seven, ten, eleven (1988, processed). (4) Upper St. Clair (Pittsburgh) Public Schools, a two-to-three-week unit in a social-studies course, "World War II and Holocaust" (nd, processed).

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Who Lost Hong Kong?

Ross H. Munro

It is better to keep Hong Kong the way it is.
—Chairman Mao Zedong, 1959

The early months of 1979 may have been Hong Kong's most glorious season. In addition to the unusually balmy pre-monsoon weather, the more than five million residents of this enclave on China's southern coast basked in the shared belief that their unique city-state had come of age. Hong Kong had survived the cataclysm of the Chinese Cultural Revolution a decade earlier, when pro-Communist mobs rampaged through the streets in a failed attempt to paralyze the British colonial government. And Hong Kong's little-regulated, low-tax economy had sturdily prevailed through the worldwide recession of the mid-1970's and was now in the fourth year of its greatest boom ever.

Hong Kong then still seemed a place of great prospects and unlimited possibilities. Its workers, most of them refugees from the Communist mainland or their children, were leaving behind a life of scraping-by. To join them in 1979, an estimated 200,000 illegal immigrants from the People's Republic of China (PRC) alone would successfully dodge security forces on both sides of the border. In Central, the main business district, where newly powerful Chinese tycoons were asserting themselves, a burgeoning commercial sector was making Hong Kong a world city. Midway between Tokyo and Seoul to the northeast and Singapore and Jakarta to the southwest, it had become the financial hub and regional corporate headquarters for the East Asian miracle. Hong Kong's land prices in the spring of 1979 were the highest in the world—and for that moment they seemed to make sense, for with a golden future apparently assured, the drastically limited supply of habitable land would inevitably continue to increase in value.

Doing an impressive job in making one of the most congested places on earth livable was the colonial government—still headed by a few British officials at the top but increasingly run by Chinese in positions both high and low. Belying Hong Kong's largely deserved reputation for laissez-faire, the government had built decent public housing for nearly half of the city's residents by 1979. This was also the year it opened the first line of a world-class mass-transit system, dramatically improving the quality of life for people who had often spent hours each day on buses that crawled through traffic-jammed streets.

With the underpinnings of economic prosperity, a unique popular culture was in full flower. Hong Kong's Cantonese-language television programs, movies, and popular music were creating a huge market throughout Southeast Asia, and beyond. Hong Kong boasted the liveliest and most diverse press in Asia. It was, as always, a Chinese city (97.5 percent, according to the census), but one with an increasingly international flavor that distinguished it sharply from the mainland. Strains of British influence mixed with newer infusions from the United States and Japan. Decades of limited government had also imparted a spirit of individualism and informality that created an atmosphere quite distinct from the Communist People's Republic of China. Hong Kong was not democratic, but it was free.

In short, if you were young, ambitious, and Chinese, as someone who fit that description said in that wonderful early spring of 1979, there was no better place in the world to be than Hong Kong.

II

Today, that same man has sold his apartment, arranged for his child to be enrolled in a foreign school, and obtained enough travel documents so that he can, if necessary, flee Hong Kong at a moment's notice for no fewer than three Western countries. He says that in any case he will not wait beyond 1993. That is four years before Hong Kong reverts to Communist control. For most Chinese residents, this chilling prospect has transformed their city into a tense and pessimistic place.

In 1984, the British ceded Hong Kong to China under an agreement that ends British rule at midnight, June 30, 1997. But Hong Kong is even now slipping under China's control, its freedoms

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already diminished and its future prosperity in grave doubt. Simultaneously, the young middle-class Chinese who made modern Hong Kong such a success are fleeing to Canada, Australia, the United States, and Singapore. The money, too, is departing, the economy is stagnating, and the social fabric has begun to unravel. Even the most dispassionate of local analysts fear that civil order may break down in Hong Kong well before 1997, and that it will be necessary to call in mainland security forces to restore peace. Then the humiliated British will choose whether to slink home or be reduced to pathetic figureheads.

Privately, British officials concede, the handover of Hong Kong is sad and unfortunate. But they quickly make two assertions in their own defense. First, they claim, the reversion of Hong Kong to China in 1997 was inevitable and unavoidable. And second, they add, since signing the Joint Declaration of 1984, the British have been doing the best they can for the people of Hong Kong under difficult circumstances.

Both British claims are false. First, China's takeover was not inevitable and could have been avoided. China, in fact, had no intention of reasserting control of Hong Kong in 1997 until—in those same golden early months of 1979—a major blunder by British officials set in motion a chain of events that prompted the Beijing government to reverse its policy of allowing British colonial rule to continue indefinitely. Second, since 1984 the British government has betrayed the people of Hong Kong by allowing the People's Republic of China to begin subjugating them even while British rule continues.

For the 1979 blunder that ultimately delivered Hong Kong into China's hands, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher cannot be held responsible. The blunder occurred, significantly, during the dying days of the 1974-79 Labor government, just weeks before she became Prime Minister. Later, in 1982 and 1983, Mrs. Thatcher would fight a ferocious, though spectacularly unsuccessful, last-ditch battle to save the city-state that for her epitomized the virtues and rewards of free markets and hard work. But since she signed the 1984 Joint Declaration, her record has been a bad one. Privately, it is said, Mrs. Thatcher is deeply distressed at the prospect of this free and vibrant city slipping back under Communist rule just as the people of the Soviet bloc are shaking off their chains. But in her public role, she must be held ultimately responsible for Britain's pathetic failure since 1984 to do what it could to protect the rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong.

III

Theoretically, as visitors to Hong Kong were often told, a Communist takeover was always just a phone call away. The British quite sensibly never pretended they could defend the tiny colony if China invaded; the soldiers of the People's Liberation Army could set out at dawn and be patrolling the streets of Central by lunchtime. And even such a simple military operation would have been unnecessary. To take control of Hong Kong, the Chinese authorities had only to stop the flow of water and food from the mainland for a few hours.

But this they never did, even at the frenzied height of the Cultural Revolution in 1967. Even Mao Zedong, the great anti-imperialist, wanted Hong Kong kept the way it was—the PRC's entrepôt, its main source of foreign exchange, and its window on the world. As China settled back into bleak Communist normality in the early 1970's, the feeling grew that the phone call might never come. In 1972, the PRC signaled its satisfaction with the status quo by telling the United Nations to take Hong Kong off its list of colonial territories. Hong Kong was sovereign Chinese territory, but its ultimate status would be "settled in an appropriate way when conditions are ripe."

At the same time, China came up with a new formulation suggesting that Britain might remain in Hong Kong indefinitely. Liao Chengzhi, then the senior PRC official responsible for Hong Kong affairs, said in October 1977, and repeated on other occasions, that Hong Kong's status would not change until after the issue of Taiwan had been resolved. Even more then than now, the prospect of Taiwan's rejoining the mainland seemed remote.

Beijing also signaled its satisfaction with the status quo by encouraging PRC-owned companies to invest heavily in the colony. And in 1979, the Chinese leadership invited Hong Kong's governor, Sir Murray MacLehose—the very personification of the British imperial presence on Chinese soil—to pay an official visit to Beijing.

There was one small cloud on the horizon. In the 19th century Britain had acquired most of the land comprising Hong Kong from the Ching Dynasty under a 99-year lease. The lease did not cover Hong Kong Island itself, nor the tip of the Kowloon Peninsula just across the harbor, both ceded outright to Britain in 1842 and 1860 respectively. But it was widely accepted that these two parcels of land could not function as a separate, viable entity. For several years, most of the colony's new housing, factories, and port facilities had been constructed in the so-called New Territories, the area covered by the lease.

All of this should have been academic, however. Since the Communists had come to power in 1949, they had repeatedly stated they did not recognize the validity of *any* of the so-called "unequal treaties" under which the feeble Ching Dynasty had been forced to cede the three parcels of land that together comprised modern-day Hong Kong. Not recognizing the treaties, the PRC naturally did not recognize the validity of either the lease or its expiry date.

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Nevertheless, the New Territories lease had become a psychological problem. By 1979, both local businessmen and prospective foreign investors were increasingly asking what would be the legal status of their existing and proposed factories or high-rises in the New Territories after June 1997. The fact that China was saying the problem did not exist because the New Territories lease was null and void was insufficient. Clearly, something needed to be done to reassure private leaseholders that they would not lose their property. The challenge for British officials was to find a way of finessing the problem by reassuring investors without ruffling the Chinese. Once this was accomplished, Hong Kong's status would remain unchanged well past 1997—something clearly desired both by the leaders of China and by the people of Hong Kong.

The Portuguese had already shown the way. In the mid-1970's they had repeatedly acknowledged that the tiny colony of Macao, on the opposite side of the Pearl River estuary, was sovereign Chinese territory, and had offered to leave. The Chinese had responded that they wanted the Portuguese to continue running the place indefinitely. The two parties put all this in a formal understanding in February 1979. The British could have tried a variation of that approach, with virtually no risk to Hong Kong.*

Indeed, by late 1978 Dr. David Owen, then the British Foreign Secretary, had already concluded that the best way to solve the 1997 issue was to offer sovereignty over all of Hong Kong to China. In an interview this summer, Owen said that he had planned to make such an offer during an official visit to Beijing scheduled for the spring of 1979. In return, he had planned to ask China to allow Hong Kong to be run either by the existing British colonial government or by a new, local administration. China could have terminated such an agreement by giving several years' notice.

But preceding Owen to Beijing, on the invitation of the Chinese government, was Sir Murray MacLehose. And in Sir Murray's briefing papers—all presumably approved by Owen—was a very different proposal.

IV

On the morning of March 29, 1979, Governor MacLehose sat down with Deng Xiaoping, China's paramount leader, in the Great Hall of the People. With him were two of the Foreign Office's leading China hands—his political adviser, David Wilson (now governor of Hong Kong), and Sir Percy Craddock, Britain's ambassador to China—and Sir Y.K. Kan, the senior Chinese political figure in the colony. What occurred at the Deng-MacLehose meeting is still the subject of dispute. According to many published accounts, Deng told MacLehose that China had already decided to take back all of Hong Kong in 1997. This, however, is simply false, and may indeed be a species of after-the-fact disinformation spread by British officials to suggest there was nothing they could have done to save Hong Kong. From an exhaustive checking of British and Chinese sources it is possible to reconstruct a more reliable account of the key moments of the meeting.

The Chinese did not raise the question of 1997; the British did. MacLehose introduced the issue by telling Deng that the looming deadline on individual land leases would soon start undermining investor confidence. He recalls saying to Deng, "We have to get rid of the date in these leases." MacLehose then unveiled a British proposal for doing this, something for which Britain was asking China's approval.

Deng's response to MacLehose's expressed concern about the uncertainty generated by 1997 was to issue a reassuring, "Tell your investors to put their hearts at ease." He reiterated China's satisfaction with the status quo, and indicated that he considered 1997 to be irrelevant. China, he said, would take Hong Kong back some day, but it alone would decide when. In short, Deng reconfirmed China's longstanding policy on Hong Kong.

But for whatever reason, MacLehose at that meeting did not explain the British proposal in detail to Deng, and Deng, in turn, failed to grasp it or to approve it. So British diplomats went back to the Chinese in the following weeks to explain the proposal and to press the Chinese for their approval. Chinese officials were mystified, then flustered, and finally alarmed: to extend the subleases would imply an extension of the New Territories lease itself. Ultimately, the Chinese concluded, the British wanted them to endorse the continuation of the "unequal treaties"; for the prickly and nationalistic Chinese, this was equivalent to implying that Hong Kong was sovereign *British* territory. And this was the one thing that no Chinese leader could ever accept.

By the early fall of 1979, the Chinese had formally and firmly rejected the British proposal. But what sealed Hong Kong's fate was a warning, never before revealed, that China included with its rejection. In unmistakable terms, China told Britain that it must not unilaterally take any legal action regarding the 1997 "deadline."

The British government's China hands had thus trapped themselves. Because of their ineptitude, they had not merely presented the Chinese leadership with a proposal it was compelled to reject; they had also provoked the leadership into for-

* The Chinese residents of Hong Kong have never demanded self-determination and have always subscribed to the abstract idea—even while abhorring its ultimate, practical implications—that Hong Kong is part of China.

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bidding the British from devising a solution of their own.

Just such a solution was urged upon Britain in the ensuing years by many concerned Hong Kong businessmen and other leading residents. Their argument was that, since China did not recognize the validity of the lease, it could not object if Britain unilaterally nullified it or its expiry date. Yet in the 1979-82 period, the British brusquely dismissed all such proposals as legally or constitutionally impossible. Officials were fond of drawing an analogy to a private lease; unless China and Britain, like landlord and tenant, agreed on renewal terms, they said, no legal validity would attach to British actions.

In fact, however, this claim was false. As Peter Wesley-Smith of the University of Hong Kong, the world's leading expert on the "unequal treaties," repeatedly argued, there were absolutely no impediments in British law to remaining in the New Territories, and the rest of Hong Kong, after 1997. The real obstacles were not legal at all, but political and diplomatic: the British government's China hands could not devise a legal solution because their clumsy actions in 1979 had prompted an alarmed China to warn them against such a move.

V

How did the 1979 blunder come about? It should have been obvious to MacLehose, Wilson, and their colleagues in the Foreign Office that, given both the history of Communism and the recent history of China, a Chinese takeover would be a disaster for Hong Kong. Their mission therefore should have been to do everything possible to keep Britain in Hong Kong as long as they could, or, to put it negatively, to minimize the chance that the 1997 deadline would precipitate a takeover.

The failure of the Foreign Office to do this was rooted in a deep ambivalence about Hong Kong itself. Late 1978 and early 1979 marked the tail end of the post-Suez, pre-Thatcher era in British foreign policy. The country was in genteel decline, the Foreign Office steeped in a culture of retreat from power and responsibility, particularly in those areas that had once made up the British empire. The ruling Labor party was particularly hostile to Hong Kong. It was not only a colony, and therefore anachronistic, it was an embarrassing—because successful—example of vulgar capitalism. Its cheap, well-made exports threatened the jobs of union workers in Britain's most inefficient industries. Neither among the China hands in the Foreign Office, nor among their masters, was there a determination to keep and protect Hong Kong. Writes Kevin Rafferty, a British journalist with long experience in Hong Kong: "In spite of the highflown phrases of commitment to Hong Kong, some influential figures in Whitehall and Westminster were always eager to find an easy way of surrendering colonial rule."

But the political and ideological bent of the Foreign Office's China hands is insufficient to explain their fatally careless handling of the Hong Kong issue in 1979. At least as important was their failure to understand a country, China, they prided themselves on knowing well. In brief, they were convinced that China in the late 70's had put turmoil and radicalism behind it and had made an irrevocable turn toward moderation, stability, and economic pragmatism. It required only one easy, additional step to conclude that, even if Hong Kong were taken over, there would be little to fear. The new China, with its overriding *commitment to economic modernization*, would never do anything to jeopardize the foreign-exchange earnings and other tangible contributions that Hong Kong was making to China's development. It would never kill the goose that laid the golden eggs. "It's not that we 'trusted' the Chinese," recalls one British official defensively, "but that we were confident they wouldn't do anything in Hong Kong to harm their economic interests."

"We," of course, were wrong—both about Communism and about China. Today, MacLehose for one clearly recognizes the historically controversial nature of what happened in 1979. Interviewed earlier this year in London on the subject of his exchange with Deng, he at one point denied raising the land-lease proposal at all, at another point conceded that he had done so but asserted it "had absolutely no subsequent influence on what happened later," and at still another point shifted responsibility for raising the issue with the Chinese: "I wasn't frightfully keen on doing so but the Foreign Office said, 'Don't let the occasion go by without a mention.'"

That is today. In 1979, the China hands were as one in their smug confidence that they understood China better than their new Prime Minister. And she, with many other more pressing issues to confront, was paying little attention.

From the fall of 1979 until April 1981, as anxiety grew in Hong Kong, the Foreign Office compounded the damage it had wrought by repeatedly pleading with the Chinese to "do something" about 1997. Eventually, the Chinese government established a working group to reexamine its Hong Kong policy. To a growing circle of officials in Beijing and their fellow-travelers in Hong Kong itself it had become clear during 1980 that the future of the fabulously rich city-state was up for grabs. And that realization let loose destructive forces of political opportunism and xenophobic nationalism, as well as personal greed and ambition.

By early 1981, this circle had succeeded in transforming the issue of Hong Kong's future into a matter of national pride—could not the Chinese

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run Hong Kong as well as, if not better than, the British? By the middle of the year the Chinese leadership decided in secret to scrap its old hands-off policy and to tell the British to leave. Deng himself may have been the last important holdout. That April, when he met the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, he was still indicating his satisfaction with the status quo. But by the end of the meeting, according to Carrington's principal private secretary, "Deng finally understood that something had to be done."

SLOWLY and adroitly, the Chinese began to reveal their intentions. In April 1982, Deng said that Hong Kong could become a Special Administrative Region of China under a new constitution promulgated later in the year. The next month, China began employing traditional Communist united-front tactics to line up support in Hong Kong for the takeover. China's top leaders coopted leading Chinese businessmen, inviting them to Beijing and promising that they would be the ones running Hong Kong when the British left. On July 16, 1982, the Chinese leadership formally announced that Hong Kong would become a Special Administrative Region of China under the one country/two systems formula.

So by the time Prime Minister Thatcher arrived in Beijing to discuss Hong Kong's future, in September 1982, it was all over. Virtually every account of this meeting portrays a stubborn and intemperate Thatcher, spurning the wise advice of her Foreign Office and infuriating Deng by insisting on the inviolability of international treaties, including those by which Britain had obtained Hong Kong. What these accounts fail to mention is that Mrs. Thatcher was also prepared to negotiate an agreement that would cancel those treaties and concede Chinese sovereignty in return for continued British administration of the colony. In other words, she was trying, desperately, to pry Hong Kong at least partly free of the tight Chinese embrace into which it had been pushed by her Foreign Office. It was a rash gamble, and it backfired. Mrs. Thatcher's stance only strengthened the hands of those who had transformed the Hong Kong issue into one of Chinese national pride. Within a year, after other, similar last-ditch attempts, an escalating propaganda barrage by China and the near-collapse of the Hong Kong dollar and its stock market, Mrs. Thatcher caved in. By early October 1983 she had told Peking in a secret note that she was willing to negotiate an agreement under which Britain would depart Hong Kong in 1997.

While Sino-British negotiations continued behind closed doors, China accelerated the united-front activities it had begun in the spring of 1982. Every few months it would issue another sweeping but vague promise designed to reassure the nervous people of Hong Kong. All the rights and freedoms then enjoyed by the people would be retained after 1997. Hong Kong's social system and its capitalist economy would "remain unchanged for 50 years." The new Hong Kong region would enjoy "a high degree of autonomy." Hong Kong people would rule Hong Kong. Business leaders, professional associations, trade unions, and other groups were all separately assured that they would have a special place in the post-1997 power structure. Chinese tycoons were led to believe that, in return for their patriotic support of Hong Kong's reunification with the motherland, they would wield more power and make bigger profits than ever before.

Despite these soothing words, however, there was another wave of panic in the spring of 1984 when the realization sank in that Britain was indeed on the verge of signing an agreement to depart for good in 1997. The publication of the Joint Declaration in September, followed by the formal signing ceremony in Beijing in December, came almost as a relief. All the promises that China had made in its propaganda campaign were in the document.*

VI

THE mood of relief lasted a year. By late 1985, Beijing had grown alarmed over a new issue—the unexpected enthusiasm Hong Kong residents were showing for democracy.

There had been little demand for democracy in Hong Kong as long as the British kept government functions to a minimum and remained responsive to public opinion. But now many in Hong Kong sensibly believed that only a directly elected legislature, speaking for the people, could resist the inevitable efforts by Beijing after 1997 to chip away at the city-state's traditional political and economic freedoms. The emerging democrats wanted these elections to be phased in rapidly, so that the people's representatives would be experienced and entrenched in the legislature well before 1997. Some British officials at that time strongly agreed. Shortly before the Joint Declaration was unveiled in 1984, the colonial government announced its intention to introduce a system of government "more directly accountable to the people of Hong Kong." For its part, Beijing grudgingly promised in the Joint Declaration that Hong Kong's legislature, then largely appointive, would be "constituted by elections."

The people enthusiastically took their current

* At a press conference in Hong Kong two days after the signing ceremony, Mrs. Thatcher was asked about the crucial Deng-MacLehose meeting in 1979. Replied the Prime Minister: "I do not know the contents of any talks which Lord MacLehose may have had." That Mrs. Thatcher may indeed have been kept ignorant of the significance of this key event seems plausible given her relationship with the Foreign Office's China hands. From the time she took office until she signed the 1984 surrender document, says a well-informed official in London, the China hands "viewed Thatcher as the key problem, not the Chinese."

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and future rulers at their word. In the 1985 local elections, a record turnout of 476,500 voters stunned cynics who had claimed that apathetic Hong Kongers would never participate in electoral politics in large numbers. Later that year, almost half of the legislature's members became accountable for the first time to either functional constituencies or an electoral college. Suddenly the Communists were facing the prospect of having to deal with genuine representatives of the people. Secretly, PRC officials demanded that Britain give them the power to approve (in other words, to block) any further steps toward democratization—particularly, direct elections to the legislature such as were planned for the late 80's. When the British briefly demurred, Xu Jiatun, then Beijing's senior representative in Hong Kong, called a news conference to rebuke Britain for allegedly "deviating" from the Joint Declaration. Knocking his eyeglasses on the table for emphasis, he warned against "major changes" in Hong Kong's politics over the following twelve years. The next day, Hong Kong's volatile stock market nosedived.

The Thatcher government capitulated almost immediately. In January 1986, the British minister responsible for Hong Kong flew to Beijing and publicly committed Britain to "convergence." From then on, Britain would consult with China to ensure that the political system in Hong Kong evolved toward what China wanted in place in 1997. With this concession, Britain not only put democratic reform in jeopardy, it in effect handed China veto power over every major decision it might make during the eleven years remaining before the formal takeover. The "convergence" agreement also permanently compromised the credibility of the Joint Declaration, which had explicitly assigned Britain the unqualified right to continue governing Hong Kong until June 30, 1997. China could now sit back and let Britain do the actual dirty work of undermining democratic reform. This it proceeded to do by slowing down the phase-in of direct elections to the legislature.

For Hong Kong, the lesson learned in 1986 and 1987 was that it could trust neither of the two countries that controlled its fate. And as this realization sank in, confidence in Hong Kong's future was further shaken by troubling news from Beijing. Once again, China was veering leftward, mocking the China hands' confident assurances of the country's longterm political and economic moderation. Soon, all the indices of public confidence in Hong Kong had begun to collapse. Emigration rose from 19,000 in 1986 to 30,000 in 1987 and 44,000 in 1988. The number of people telling pollsters they intended to emigrate climbed steadily after 1986 to 1.5 million. The economic growth rate peaked in 1987, then dropped in a straight line, hitting zero by the end of 1989. Also in 1987, capital flight began to increase.

These figures make nonsense of today's British claim that the transition to 1997 was going reasonably smoothly until the night of June 3, 1989, when Chinese soldiers marched into Tiananmen Square in Beijing and massacred unarmed demonstrators demanding democratic reforms. Earlier that spring, hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong residents had marched and rallied to show their support of the Beijing students. After the massacre, as many as one million people, representing the vast majority of families in Hong Kong, marched again in outrage. What the massacre did was to bring out of the closet the private fears and secret contingency plans of the Hong Kong Chinese. Overnight, virtually every middle-class Chinese was talking about a plan to escape before the Communists took over. As for those resigned to staying, where many had been previously willing to give Beijing the benefit of the doubt, after the massacre they became anxious, bitter, and resentful.

A FLICKER of hope that Britain would seize the moment of Tiananmen to speed up the pace and scope of direct elections was snuffed out early this year when the Thatcher government acceded to China's insistence that no more than 20 of Hong Kong's 60 legislators be directly elected before 1997. The British authorities in Hong Kong have also been making life difficult for Chinese dissidents, arresting anti-Communist demonstrators, stepping up censorship of movies deemed potentially offensive to China, and remaining silent while Communist officials intimidate the population. Little is heard from Mrs. Thatcher herself.

In Beijing, Chinese leaders now view Hong Kong as, in their words, a "counterrevolutionary base" that must be suppressed. For them, Hong Kong's continued economic prosperity ranks a distant second to the need to eliminate it as a security threat. Almost every day, they find a new way of showing that they will tolerate no dissent when they take over.

Nothing illustrates China's new attitude more vividly than its repeated warnings that it may not recognize foreign passports acquired by ethnic Chinese born in Hong Kong. For decades, many affluent Hong Kong Chinese have used various means to acquire foreign citizenship as "insurance" for the future. Acknowledging the utility of such insurance, the British government itself has reluctantly agreed to issue British passports to 50,000 Chinese families in Hong Kong. The hope has been that, secure in the knowledge that they have a permanent right to live in Britain or the United States or elsewhere abroad, foreign passport holders will not rush to emigrate but will leave only if post-1997 conditions become intolerable. But with China now threatening that it will not recognize the validity of these passports, the "insurance policies" have become exit permits

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with an expiry date. This will push many of Hong Kong's best and brightest—and richest—to depart before the 1997 deadline. And that suits China's purpose: it does not want anyone living in Hong Kong it cannot control, even those who contribute most to the city-state.

The hemorrhage of managers, technicians, and professionals is well under way. The Hong Kong government's latest, upwardly revised estimate is that 62,000 will emigrate in 1990 alone, and that estimate ignores the thousands who are entering Western countries on student and other temporary visas with no intention of ever returning. The result is that Hong Kong is rapidly losing its reputation as one of the world's most efficient places to do business. Costs are rising and quality is declining as jobs are filled by people with little experience and poor skills who are demanding, and receiving, artificially inflated salaries. To get rich quick was always considered a respectable goal in Hong Kong, but now the pursuit of money has taken on a nasty and frantic edge. Hong Kong's surgeons charge the highest fees in the world because nearly all of them plan to emigrate to Western countries where they are not licensed to practice. "Increased corruption" has found its way into business forecasts; swindles and frauds are on the rise. Violent crime, too, is on the rise; armed robbery increased 40 percent from last spring to this.

Even more troubling than the increase in crime is the possibility of a general breakdown of law and order before 1997. Hong Kong witnessed serious and widespread rioting with political overtones in the 1950's and 1960's, but at that time a respected British administration could rely on the police to stand up to the rioters. Today the police are seriously under strength, their morale is low, and their willingness to follow orders in a crisis from lame-duck British administrators cannot be taken for granted.

VII

Current trends, combined with the certainty of the 1997 takeover, have prompted many to predict the death of Hong Kong or the collapse of its economy. Neither is very likely. Hong Kong is on its way to becoming a mean and dispirited place, but economically and physically it will survive. Its business elite, and the PRC leadership, still expect to make a lot of money together in future years, and they probably will. True to their word, the Communists will almost certainly refrain from seizing businesses or private property. Instead, they are already working hand in glove with major corporations in Hong Kong to establish a system of authoritarian capitalism in which profits are assured by adopting the mainland Communists' neo-feudal ways of doing business—nepotism, connections, and payoffs. Because of Hong Kong's superb location and its free-port status, multinational corporations, international banks, and the regional publishing industry will try to stay despite rising costs, corruption, and diminishing freedoms.

Meanwhile, real wages will be driven down by importing workers from the mainland, something PRC officials are already promoting. Even now they can hardly disguise their eagerness for the day when hundreds of thousands of contract workers—political eunuchs who can be sent home the moment they become assertive—will be remitting most of their foreign-exchange earnings to the mainland. Emigrating professionals will be replaced by English-speaking Filipinos and Indians willing to work for less. Neither the newly arrived Asians nor the mainlanders will have any long-term commitment to the Hong Kong community.

Plans to import cheap labor help illustrate how, even in its narrowest economic sense, the golden-goose argument was wrong. For at least several years after 1997, the Chinese, no matter how badly they treat the place, will be able to squeeze more foreign-exchange profits out of Hong Kong than ever before. The PRC can allow Hong Kong's superb infrastructure to deteriorate for several decades, just as it did in Shanghai, before paying a high price.

In the long term, one can imagine a political convulsion in China that will decimate the central government's power or lead to a genuinely democratic capitalist regime. Either could set the stage for a gradual recovery of Hong Kong's freedom and vitality. But in the short term, any such convulsion would just accelerate the exodus. For the 1990's, at least, the Hong Kong catastrophe is essentially irreversible. It is a great tragedy, and one that could have been avoided.

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The Great Hack Genius

Joseph Epstein

NOWADAYS, as the media boys down at the ad agency are likely to tell you, the name Ben Hecht doesn't have much carry. Ben Hecht, Ben Huebsch, Ben Hur, one can easily imagine a crossword-puzzle or *Trivial Pursuit* addict struggling to get the name straight. Persons now of a certain age will recall Hecht as the co-author, with Charles MacArthur, of the play *The Front Page*, subsequently made into three different film versions. The movie-minded will remember that Ben Hecht was perhaps the foremost Hollywood screenwriter of his day: "the giant," as Degas said of Meissonier, "of the dwarfs"—a sentiment with which Hecht himself would probably have agreed. Fewer people figure to remember that Ben Hecht was a uniquely blacklisted screenwriter: unique in that the films he worked on were blacklisted not in America but by the British. In his day Ben Hecht was also a journalist, novelist, poet, autobiographer, and movie director, ran a television talk show, and in his spare time was a fairly serious woman chaser.

No one could ever accuse Ben Hecht of concentrating his efforts, husbanding his substance, spending his talent wisely and well. Profligate in the root and every other sense of the word, Hecht was a man whose failures are perhaps more instructive than his successes, and who—one may as well admit it at the outset—was a good deal more interesting than significant. But interesting he genuinely was. "He was a pretty devious guy with lots of different sides to him," said the movie director Howard Hawks. Hecht turned out a vast quantity of garbagey commercial writing yet seemed not particularly driven by greed or delighted by the rewards brought by money. He was never taken in by the radical politics of the 1930's—"Once a revolutionist," he noted, "always a hack"—yet risked his reputation and his earning power by openly supporting the Irgun in Mandatory Palestine from the 1940's onward (which is what gained him the enmity of the British). He was until late in life an agnostic yet was obsessed by, sometimes brutal toward, and often sentimental about, his fellow Jews.

From Ben Hecht's earliest adult years there was about him the aura of the legendary. As a young journalist in Chicago, he was a relentless scoopster and, later, he famously brought the use of novelistic detail to the newspaper column. As a short-story writer, he contributed to Margaret Anderson's *Little Review* and H. L. Mencken's *Smart Set* and *American Mercury*; the critic Harry Hansen called him "the Pagliacci of the fire escape"; and the expatriate American poet Ezra Pound, when asked why he chose not to return to his native country, replied that "there is only one intelligent man in the whole United States to talk to—Ben Hecht." Both the French director Jean-Luc Godard and the American producer David O. Selznick claimed that, as a screenwriter, Hecht was the best in the business, ever; and the film critic Pauline Kael, after Hecht's death, remarked that he had had a hand in roughly half the most entertaining movies produced in Hollywood. Of such stuff are legends made.

Now a biography of Ben Hecht has appeared, written by William MacAdams, a journalist who specializes in the movies, and it does indeed carry the subtitle, "The Man Behind the Legend."* One is reminded of the story the pianist Oscar Levant told about meeting Greta Garbo after his friend, the playwright S.N. Behrman, had told her about Levant's legendary wit. Thrown by so glamorous a movie star, Levant, upon introduction, burbled something about not quite catching her name. At this Greta Garbo, turning to Behrman, remarked, "It is better that he should remain a legend." Is the same true of Ben Hecht? Will modern biography, with its propensity for digging up hallowed ground, reveal him to have been a greatly overrated, or dreary, or finally quite disgusting character? Will it prove better that Ben Hecht, too, should remain a legend?

HECHT'S parents emigrated to New York from Minsk, in southern Russia, in 1878. Joseph Hecht worked as a cutter in the garment district; in 1899, when Ben was six, the family moved to Chicago. Four years later, Joseph Hecht took his family to Racine, Wisconsin, where he began manufacturing his own line of women's dresses, which he not only designed

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* *Ben Hecht*, Scribners, 364 pp., $24.95.

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but pushed as a salesman on the road. His wife, Sarah, sold these dresses in a shop she ran in downtown Racine. In *A Child of the Century*, his autobiography, Ben Hecht reports that his father was a delusionist. "He savored success before it came. He rolled in millions when only pennies were in the safe. . . . He never had any profits to share with his family, except for the happy smile of his daydreams."

But business failure did not issue in family unhappiness. Hecht grew up loving his parents and his large, extended, nutty Jewish family of wild uncles and half-mad aunts, among them Tante Chasha, who advised the young Benjamin to "shun small women because they had large vaginas." The central, the essential character in Hecht's youth was his mother. She, he writes, "disdained sentimentality, bristled at flattery, sneered at hypocrites, and God—Whom she respected—was less to her than honesty." It must have been from his mother that Hecht's high opinion of himself derived. "She never sought to instruct me or improve me. She deemed me moral and upright as herself, as a queen might deem her son to be of royal blood." A man confident of his mother's love, said Freud, is a conqueror. He might also, Freud neglected to add, have to become a con man. Hecht continues: "I never gave her even a hint of what sort of unroyal fellow I actually was. She would probably have loved me no less had she known. But that sort of gamble was beyond me in the boyhood days when I fashioned myself into a liar for her sake."

If con came readily enough to Hecht, so did confidence, for which throughout his life he never wanted. For some people the world represents terror, for others adventure. Ben Hecht was one of the others. To him security was never a serious concern, or even a legitimate category, and he appears never to have done anything with it in mind. He walked away from a university education, for example, having lasted three days at the University of Wisconsin; he claimed to have read most of the books in the school's Arts and Sciences prospectus, which might even have been true, since he was an omnivorous boy who had made his way through 19th-century novels, Shakespeare, world histories, and other steaming literary dishes from the autodidact's table.

As it turned out, Ben Hecht had no real need of a university. Four years in such an institution might have sufficed to kill off all that was most original and vital in him. Instead he went to that other, perhaps greater, university—let us call it, in lower-case letters, city college—the American newspaper. Apart from those who came from well-to-do, or possibly socially nervous, families, most of the best American writers of the time, from Theodore Dreiser through Ernest Hemingway, acquired their education this way. H.L. Mencken, whose family did have the money to send him to college and who was a good and conscientious student, chose instead to work on a Baltimore daily. He said the choice was between covering murders, fires, and raids on bordellos, and sitting in the stands of a stadium on a cold day in a raccoon coat waving a pennant—not, as Mencken saw it, much of a choice.

Hecht's first newspaper job was on the Chicago *Daily Journal*. He was seventeen when he began, but he already knew that he was where he was meant to be. Journalism provided, he would later write, "a world that offered no discipline, that demanded no alteration in me. It bade me to go out and look at life, devour it, enjoy it, report it. There were no responsibilities beyond enthusiasm." Hecht's initial assignment on the *Journal* was that of picture-chaser, whose task it was to come up with photographs of the recently scandalized, the violated, or violently dead: the divorced, the raped, the murdered. Since families of these victims were not generally keen to have such photographs in the press, the job of picture-chaser called for ingenuity—and a pretty good set of burglary tools. Hecht brought both to the job, along with much youthful energy. Once he smoked a family out of its house in winter by sealing off the chimney, then proceeded to enter and begin his search. Another time he shocked even his case-hardened employers by stealing a four-foot-square oil painting of a murdered Pole. "I'd go a little easy if I were you," the assistant city editor instructed him.

Before long the young Ben Hecht was made a reporter and given journalistic run of Chicago. This meant that he covered whorehouses and madhouses, courtrooms and poolrooms, hangings and fires, riots and theatricals. When he couldn't find a story, he made one up. He worked among men with odd erudition and even odder appetites who filled him in on how the world worked. He much admired Sherman Duffy, then the sports editor of the *Journal*, a horticulturalist specializing in irises, a Phi Beta Kappa, and the paper's most capacious drinker. "Socially, a journalist fits in somewhere between a whore and a bartender," Duffy once pronounced, "but spiritually he stands beside Galileo. He knows the world is round." Under men like Duffy, Hecht learned this, too. He also learned, in those early Chicago days, that he loved life—a love he could never shake. "Now after long immersion in the brutishness and lunacy of events and with the vision in me that tomorrow is a hammer swinging at the skull of man," he would write in *A Child of the Century*, "I still glow with this first love."

ALTHOUGH Hecht spent most of his childhood in Wisconsin, and much the greater part of his adult life in New York and Hollywood, he continues to be thought of as a Chicago writer. True enough, his years in Chicago—he worked there from 1910 until 1924, with a year out as a correspondent in Germany—did

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seem to form him. Chicago in those days presented the grand spectacle of the nation's most cynical politics, endless opportunities for big financial scores, and assorted social classes, ethnic groups, hustlers, marks, freaks, dorks, and yokels going at one another nearly full-time. Such a spectacle would tend to leave its imprint on a young man, especially one paid to write about it and make it seem even more lively than it already was. Chicago stirred both Ben Hecht's cynicism ("You'll find out that's the easiest thing people can do," his mentor Sherman Duffy said, "change into swine") and his sentimentality ("There was no money in his pocket, no food in his stomach," Hecht wrote in one of his many columns about the defeated in Chicago, "no hope in his heart").

Not only the city of Chicago but its newspapers were wide open: one could still print, over the story of a dentist arrested for rape, the headline "Dentist Filled Wrong Cavity"; one could still quote a man, asked on the gallows if he had anything further to say, answering, "Not at this time." Through energy and skill, Hecht was eventually promoted from reporter to columnist. His column, appearing in the Chicago *Daily News* under the rubric "One Thousand and One Afternoons," was a great success in its day. In ours the best that can be said is that it still has its moments. If much of the material now seems cliché-ridden, one does well to recall that Hecht invented many of those clichés. The work-worn mother of the young whore, the con man down on his uppers, the busted-out man of letters, the heavily hit-upon manicurist, the foreign-born laborer whose wife has deserted him—Hecht did what used to be called "human interest" (is there another kind?). He served it up, in the literary pre-cholesterol era, with plenty of *schmaltz*. And yet he could ruminate on why people who look too long at Lake Michigan tend to grow sad, or how Michigan Boulevard ("this Circe of streets") allows Chicagoans to dream of a more heroic life than was (or remains) available on the city's commercial streets, and do so in ways that make a pleasing ping on the truth gong even today.

Ben Hecht not only had a strong appetite for life, an abundant flow of energy, and a high threshold for chaos, such as only the top journalists possess, but he could write. He loved words; he could construct interesting sentences. He also knew that "phrases, not ideas, are the tools for recreating life." That he had also acquired a strong penchant for overwriting, let pass for now.

But then newspapers were more literary in those days. When the *New Yorker* started up in 1926, it was staffed chiefly by people—James Thurber, E.B. White, Katherine Angell, its editor Harold Ross himself—whose experience came chiefly from newspapers. The Chicago Renaissance, the curious gathering of writers that led H. L. Mencken in Baltimore to call Chicago "the literary capital of the U.S.," was made up almost exclusively of newspapermen (with the exception of Sherwood Anderson, who was first in the paint and then the advertising business). Floyd Dell, Carl Sandburg, Maxwell Bodenheim, Vachel Lindsay all put in their time on newspapers; so did such lesser-known figures as Vincent Starrett, Harry Hansen, Francis Hackett, and Burton Rascoe. Literary historians have set different dates for the Chicago Renaissance, but most agree that it began roughly with the founding in Chicago of Harriet Monroe's *Poetry, A Magazine of Verse* in 1912 (Margaret Anderson's *Little Review*, the first American magazine to run fragments of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, was also published in Chicago until it was moved to New York in 1916 and thence to Paris in 1919, where it folded) and closed with Ben Hecht's departure for New York in the spring of 1924.

A false rebirth, the Chicago Renaissance did not come to much—"Would that our writing had been as fine as our lunches," was Hecht's own final word on the phenomenon—but while it lasted it must have been a hell of a lot of fun. It was bohemian in style and avant-garde in spirit. During these years Hecht, while continuing his newspaper job, wrote a number of novels and much poetry that took their aesthetic lead from Imagism, German Dadaism, and other European imports. All are today quite unreadable. Always prolific, always in need of a few extra bucks—he had married in 1915, at the age of twenty-two, and soon acquired the habit of living grandly—Hecht also pumped out a large number of stories for H.L. Mencken at the *Smart Set*. At the Dill Pickle Club, scene in Chicago of poetry readings, one-act plays, and other excruciating evenings of advanced culture, Hecht once engaged to debate Maxwell Bodenheim over the question, "That People Who Attend Literary Debates Are Imbeciles." Hecht began by announcing that the affirmative side rested, Bodenheim followed with "You win," and the two men walked off with the evening's receipts.

One of Hecht's novels, *Fantazius Mallare* (1922), had the good fortune to be censored for obscenity and to become thereby a *cause célèbre*. It was defended (unsuccessfully) by the famous lawyer Clarence Darrow—a man who seems to have lost an inordinate number of cases—and the episode ended with Hecht being fired from his newspaper job. He next began, with Maxwell Bodenheim as associate editor, a larky, bohemian-spirited paper called the *Chicago Literary Times*, though in the last three months of its roughly sixteen-month existence it was known as *Ben Hecht's Chicago Literary Times*. Hecht and Bodenheim would also use each other as characters in novels. Bodenheim, in his, wrote of his Hecht character:

He wanted to be an affluent, luxurious, com-

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> mercial panderer, tossing off flashy bilge with his tongue in his cheek, and also an unruly, brilliant, slashing intellect in more serious talk and creations . . . he wanted to be supreme in both camps, commercial and artistic, without pledging allegiance to either one. . . .

It was only after Hecht left Chicago for New York that this split in him between the serious and the commercial—the one writing for the show, the other for the dough—became an issue in his career. The need for money was now there. He had shed his first wife in Chicago, and taken the woman who would be his second (and final) wife with him to New York. He had debts, fairly large ones, and a taste for high living; at a minimum he had no wish to be mindful of those small expenses—for rent, clothes, food, and drink—over which most people are bound to spend their lives worrying. By now, after producing six novels, he knew that he could not score with a best-seller, and so he turned his supple talent to the theater.

Did he also know that he simply was not a very good novelist? *Erik Dorn* (1921) is Hecht's best-known work from his Chicago years, and it is a mess, a compendium of its author's strengths and more voluminous weaknesses. Hecht's epigram-making power is among his strengths—he would always be adept at one-liners—and it is nicely displayed in this novel. "'The press,' Dorn once remarked, 'is a blind old cat yowling on a treadmill.'" And: "It's the only art we've developed in America—overdressing." And (Dorn speaking again): "'I advise you to complicate life with ideals. . . . A conscience is an immediate annoyance, whereas ideals are charming procrastinations.'" Although the character Erik Dorn is given the same physique and job as Hecht's friend Sherman Duffy, he is otherwise clearly intended autobiographically; and being the autobiographically-based character of a somewhat overheated writer in his late twenties, Dorn is also, as who will be surprised, the epitome of an *Übermensch*.

The novel has no shortage of overwriting (snow is "a thick white lattice [which] raised itself from the streets against the darkness"); hernia-causing heavy thinking ("The race can survive only as long as its weakest survive"); hopelessly ornate vocabulary ("the love affair of a Baptist angel and the hamadryad daughter of a Babayaga"); and an inflation of the chief character that results in unconscious comedy ("'You are too big for love to hold,'" says Dorn's ever obsequious lover). No need to summarize the plot of *Erik Dorn*, for there really is none. Instead there is a rather unpersuasive, self-justifying account of the breakup of Dorn/Hecht's marriage and another of Dorn/Hecht's days as a correspondent in Germany after the war. "'I admire revolution,'" says Dorn in this portion of the book. "'Why? Because it diverts.'" Maybe for Dorn, but not, sad to report, for the reader.

What is of interest in *Erik Dorn* are the occasional remarks on what I take to be Hecht's own self-acknowledged shortcomings as a serious writer. Many of these are made by means of the contrast between Dorn and Warren Lockwood, a character based on Sherwood Anderson, of whom Dorn says: "'The fellow's content to write. I'm not. He's found his way of saying what's in him, getting rid of his energies and love. I haven't.'" Lockwood says of Dorn: "'He's the kind of man who knows too damn much and don't [*sic*] believe anything.'" And Dorn later says of himself: "'My damned cleverness puts me beyond artists who find a destination for their energies in the struggle to achieve the thing with which I began.'"

But outside books, in so-called real life, Sherwood Anderson was not buying any of this. In a letter to Hecht, quoted in William McAdams's biography, he wrote:

> . . . why do you have to bluff and bluff and impress me. Why are you so unsure of yourself. You can write man. You don't have to convince me of anything.

RETURN now to Maxwell Bodenheim's novel, *Duke Herring*, where of his Ben Hecht character Bodenheim writes:

> His favorite boast was that he intended to accumulate a million dollars in the following year, and though this goal had eluded him so far, he did amass thousands of dollars annually through the sale of meretricious short stories, shallowly clever plays with short runs, and epileptic novels, whose malicious brilliance always held one eye cocked toward the adding machine in the publisher's office.

Bodenheim's portrait is far from free of malice, but it does underscore the issue around which people have always considered Hecht's career. This issue can be formulated simply enough: was Ben Hecht a sell-out? The term sell-out has a dishonorable history. It originated in the enclosed, always at least slightly paranoid, world of American Communism, where any divergence from the party line sent from Moscow was felt to constitute a desertion, or selling-out, of true principles. Transferred to the realm of art, the term meant betrayal of one's talent for the sake of either money or popular success or both. The assumption was that buyers were everywhere: Hollywood and Henry Luce, the critic Edmund Wilson famously remarked in the 1930's, were the two great enemies of talent in our time.

The notion inevitably lent a strong note of inner drama to artistic careers. Anyone who wrote for the movies, or Broadway, or the news magazines, or at one point the *New Yorker* (where Edmund Wilson himself eventually found a financially comfortable home), or later television, had to consider the possibility that he was selling out. It was of course also and always a self-gratulatory

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possibility, implying that one had something high and fine and serious in oneself to sell. Writers pumping out zippy prose for *Time*, or pilots for television sitcoms, could think that but for their staggering alimony payments or their children's private-school bills they might be devoting themselves to the deep art (great novel, elegant book of poems, powerful play) that lay buried within them. Such was the interior scenario that permitted one to cry—or, in some instances, drink—all the way to the bank.

But the line between what passed for selling out and what for artistic purity began in time to blur. The year 1964 may have been a watershed, when Mary McCarthy, with *The Group*, and Saul Bellow, with *Herzog*, both formerly small-public writers, had novels on the best-seller list. Soon authors one was accustomed to read exclusively in *Partisan Review*, *Kenyon Review*, and other intellectual journals began to appear with some regularity in *Esquire*, *Playboy*, even *Vogue*, where for a time the historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. served as movie critic. Writers of the most extravagant intellectual pretensions—Harold Rosenberg, Susan Sontag, George Steiner—became frequent contributors to the *New Yorker*. Others went off to Hollywood without bad conscience, and why should they have done otherwise during a period—the middle 60's through the middle to late 70's—when movies were themselves awarded great (if finally false) intellectual prestige? As the distinction between highbrow and middlebrow art, along with that between elite and mass culture, itself began to blur, the entire notion of selling out began to seem questionable. Not that genuine talent, of literary and other kinds, did not continue to be deflected by the palmy prospects of big money and popular success. It did and does. Only nowadays no one seems much to notice.

In Ben Hecht's day people noticed—and perhaps few more so than Hecht himself. Through his work there runs an almost continuous criticism of the kind of writing he spent the better part of his own career doing, and this criticism contains more than an implicit suggestion of contempt. Soon after Hecht arrived in New York, for example, he began writing for the Broadway stage. At first he did so with moderate success; and then, in *The Front Page* (1928), with smashing success. Yet in a most peculiar novel entitled *A Jew in Love* (1931), Hecht could say the following about Broadway writers little different from himself:

> These Jews [who dominate the night life of Broadway], decadent, humanless, with minds sharp and strident as banjos, offer through the mask of their perversities the last blatant sob of Jewish culture. They sing of mothers, babies, faraway homelands, of breaking hearts and lost joys, but to this eternal scenario of middle-class art they add a set of histrionics filched from the dwindling synagogues. Their songs quiver with self-pity, are full of the unscrupulous wailings of ancient Jew grief tricked out in Negro, Russian, and Oriental rhythms, and pounded home with the rabbinical slobber of an atonement prayer.

Further qualification does not make it better. Maybe rather worse:

> Their wit, sterile with disillusion, cackling, derisive, full of epithet, proclaims them clowns and from behind their clownish front they sell Jewish tears at a fancy profit; weep into the coffee cups and wine glasses of the Gentiles and label the performance Broadway. Their doltish amours, their slapstick repartee and ragbag talents are chronicled by scores of journalists who follow them around like a procession of Pepyses.

HECHT spent still more of his life working on movies, about which he had even darker views. The movies, in his opinion, were quite simply the enemy of art; they were for the people, and the People (Hecht used a capital P), from the Renaissance on, always knew that Art (with a capital A) wasn't for them. "When you think of all the books, statues, paintings, oratorios, symphonies, cantos, etcetera that the People have never been able to enjoy, you can begin to understand their excitement over the Movies [caps again]," Hecht wrote in a story, "The Missing Idol."

> The Movies are their Cellinis and Angelos, their Shakespeares and Shelleys. They control all the plots and elect their own geniuses. And, like some international Lorenzo the Magnificent, they distribute rewards undreamed of by their ancient enemies—the Artists.

In yet another story, "The Heavenly Choir," this one about a man who makes a fortune by recognizing and then realizing the potential of radio for selling products, Hecht considers the advantages of so potent a mass medium for conveying the beauties of art to the beastly masses. Could not radio bring about "the long-awaited liaison between Beauty and the Beast"? Not, it turns out, in Hecht's view—not radio, nor the movies, nor any other medium. When Beauty lay down with the Beast, he notes, "it was not the Beast that underwent any marked alteration, but, as always, Beauty. For Beauty lying down with the Beast too often grows a bit cockeyed and contemptible herself." The attitude expressed here is rather more like T.S. Eliot than like the man who churned out more than seventy-odd credited and uncredited movie scripts.

Although Hecht was to write for Broadway sporadically over the years, it is his work for the movies that has been best remembered. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say, for which *he* is best remembered. Given the zany nature of collabora-

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tion in Hollywood, it is not always easy to know who wrote what. Of the producer in his story "The Missing Idol," Hecht observes: "Some eight different scripts were prepared by a dozen different authors, all of them of considerable renown (for it was Mr. Kolisher's principle to discard only the best)." This same Kolisher, an amalgam of the Jewish mogul-tyrants of the early Hollywood years, actually cuts out a scene from the movie he has produced on the life of Jesus that was inserted into the film by God Himself.

Hecht seems to have taken little pride in most of the work he did for Hollywood, apart from the extraordinary speed with which he could turn it out and the size of the fees he could demand for it. That he is best remembered for the work about which he cared least is an irony unlikely to have escaped him.

But then much having to do with Ben Hecht's career in Hollywood is suffused with irony, ambiguity, comedy, misunderstanding. Even Hecht's Hollywood beginnings had a touch of madcap comedy about them. "Will You Accept Three Hundred Per Week to Work for Paramount Pictures?" Herman Mankiewicz wired him. "All Expenses Paid. The Three Hundred Is Peanuts. Millions Are to Be Grabbed Out Here and Your Competition Is Idiots. Don't Let This Get Around." Before joining the Hollywood gold rush, Mankiewicz had been a second-line drama critic for the New York *Times* and, as befitted a man who had put in his time at the round table at the Algonquin, had famously remarked that "Los Angeles is a great place to live if you're an orange." (Mankiewicz's own claim to fame is the screenplay for *Citizen Kane*, though there is controversy over whether or not he actually wrote it.) It was Mankiewicz who, serving briefly as Hecht's screenwriting tutor, explained to him that in a novel "the hero can lay ten girls and marry a virgin for a finish," whereas in the movies "the hero, as well the heroine, has to be a virgin."

Not that Hecht, a quick study if ever there was one, needed a tutor for long. His first screenplay, *Underworld*, written for a movie directed by Josef von Sternberg, won one of the sixteen Oscars presented at the first Academy Awards ceremony in 1929. Hecht claimed that when he first saw what Sternberg had done to his script he felt as if attacked by *mal de mer*, but he nonetheless accepted his Oscar and the higher fees that winning it brought. In *Talking Pictures: Screenwriters in the American Cinema*, Richard Corliss writes that not only was Ben Hecht typical of Hollywood screenwriters; he was, in effect, *the* Hollywood screenwriter:

> Nearly every facet of that talented and haunted breed—from the streetcorner wit and inexhaustible articulateness to the sense of compromise and feelings of artistic frustration—can be found in Hecht's dazzlingly contradictory career. Indeed, it can be said without too much exaggeration that Hecht personifies Hollywood itself: a jumble of talent, cynical and overpaid; most successful when he was least ambitious; often failing when he mistook sentimentality for seriousness, racy, superficial, vital, and *American*.

The legendary Ben Hecht stories have to do with making large sums for little labor, or taking on big jobs without anything like serious preparation—and just because the stories are legendary does not mean they are untrue. He worked on the screenplay for *Gone With the Wind*, for example, without having read the novel; other people summarized it for him as he went along. To two stenographers he dictated a full screenplay for the producer Samuel Goldwyn in a single day, for which he (and, on this project, his partner Charles MacArthur) received $25,000 and 3.5 percent of the gross. He worked on the script of *Scarface* for Howard Hughes (then running a Hollywood studio) for $1,000 a day; since Hughes's solvency was then in doubt, Hecht added a provision that he be paid after each day's work, sharply at six o'clock, and he was. Throughout his career he did a vast amount of script doctoring, usually for heavy fees, since he was generally called in at a point of crisis. ("Whenever my father was in trouble," Sam Goldwyn, Jr. told the biographer A. Scott Berg, "he went to Ben Hecht.") David O. Selznick said: "Ben in my opinion was the greatest of all scenario writers." This is an opinion with which Joseph Stalin, apparently, would have agreed. After seeing Hecht and Howard Hawks's movie about Pancho Villa (*Viva Villa!*), William McAdams reports, Stalin "was prepared to send a battleship to fetch Hecht back to the USSR but Hecht refused when he learned that the film Stalin wanted to make would only be shown in the USSR." The stuff of which legends are made.

Hecht had few illusions about the standing of writers in Hollywood. According to an unnamed screenwriter quoted in Neal Gabler's *An Empire of Their Own*, "Jews are the writers of the business and writers are the Jews of the business." Hecht noted that "at a Hollywood party, there would be forty or fifty celebrities, but I don't think you'd find any writers, possibly one, at the most two. They were never invited out in mixed company. They were treated much like butlers, socially." The service writers provided for the powerhouse studio owner, according to Hecht, was to make him feel, through his power, somehow cultured: "The higher the class of talent he could tell what to do and how to do it, the more giddily cultured he could feel himself." Yet Hecht also understood that these often coarse men (one of them, Harry Cohn, used to say that he had "a foolproof device for deciding whether a picture is good or bad—if my ass squirms, it's bad; if my

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ass doesn't squirm, it's good") were not without their own strange but real talents. Samuel Goldwyn, though often inarticulate, could be oddly stimulating: he "filled the room with wonderful panic and beat at your mind like a man in front of a slot machine, shaking it for a jackpot."

But the main point, which Hecht rightly seems never for a moment to have forgotten, was to get as much money out of these men as one could. And there was lots to get. In an amusing story entitled "Concerning a Woman of Sin," Hecht sets out to explain why in Hollywood so many mediocre people are paid so much money. It is owing, he claims, to the agent, "for it was the agent who first uncovered the Basic Principle of Hollywood":

> This is that the Pharaohs who run the studios measure their own greatness by the amount of money they are able to spend. There is, in fact, no other activity open to them. The Pharaoh who can spend the most money on stars and geniuses becomes automatically the most dazzling figure in the cinema capital. Thus the competition to run the studios into bankruptcy is an extremely hot one. That all the studios are not quickly ruined by these royal extravagances is due to a single fact out of their control. . . . The popularity of the movies has become almost equal to that of sex.

In the same story, Hecht has a Hollywood Pharaoh, one Jerome B. Cobb—a character modeled, it was said, on Louis B. Mayer, who never forgave Hecht—buy and invest millions on a screenplay that he does not know has been written by a nine-year-old girl bred on *True Confessions* and *True Love Stories*. "'God, I love this town,'" says the agent who sells the screenplay.

Yet there is evidence that, despite his contempt for the chances of producing even halfway serious work in Hollywood, Hecht more than once made the effort. On a few occasions, he was even able to direct his own scripts, using the artful cinematographer Lee Garmes; and in one instance, *Angels Over Broadway* (1940), he served as writer, director, and producer. I have never seen this movie, but even fanatical moviegoers do not rate it all that highly. Leonard Maltin gives it two and a half stars, saying that "it's just too offbeat (and pleased with itself about it)"; Richard Corliss advises, "Read the script, don't see the movie."

Those who study movies with an intensity worthy of oncological CAT scans profess to see many a hallmark, even a comprehensive vision, in a Ben Hecht script. They speak of the gusto, style, satire, cynicism that he could get into his writing; one even uses the phrase "Hechtian man." Corliss writes: "It is his crisp, frenetic, sensational prose and dialogue style that elevates his work above that of the dozens of other reporters who streamed west to cover and exploit Hollywood's biggest 'story': the talkie revolution."

Yet when one reads down Hecht's filmography, noting that he had a hand in *Gilda, Spellbound, Wuthering Heights*, one also notes that his was not the only hand. Corliss rightly remarks that any true assessment awaits discovery of which movies Hecht substantially wrote and what were the contributions of the men who collaborated with him. "For, just as Hecht is often ignored in discussions of Hawks or Hitchcock," Corliss says, "so are Charles MacArthur, Charles Lederer, and Gene Fowler forgotten on those rare occasions when Hecht's work is seriously appraised."

"I can't help it," the agent in "Concerning a Woman of Sin" frequently tells his clients. "I guess I'm not a judge of movies. I hate 'em too much." Did Ben Hecht, too, hate them? Hard to say. Surely, he hated Hollywood, which he regarded as a combination gold and salt mine. "Anyone with a good memory for clichés and unafraid to write like a child can bat out a superb movie in a few days," he remarked in his autobiography. He nowhere that I know speaks of a love for the movies; and one never gets from him the standard nonsense either about the special glories of the cinematic art or (as we have seen) about the movies as the great art of democracy.

Then why did Hecht, caring so little for the movies or for the money, work so hard at his writing? Ben Hecht had a boredom problem. As he grew older, he maintained, it was boredom that caused him to seek out "the ego disturbances which women can provide"—as pretty a euphemism for skirt-chasing as one is likely to find. Without what he called "the menace of ennui," he said that he would never have written for the theater or the movies. "Work itself, swift, half-mindless and exhausting, a happy drug," was what he required. And as long as he was working, why not make it pay off?

One believes Hecht when he says, in his autobiography, "the money I earned meant almost nothing." Certainly he found efficient ways of ridding himself of it: keeping a staff of servants that included a driver, a trainer, a cook, and, when in Hollywood, an additional kitchen-maid staff of three; toss in alimony, heavy taxes, two homes (one in Nyack, New York, the other in Oceanside, California), and other sideline amusements, and you can understand how in 1954 Hecht could write that for the past twenty-five years he had been "without a bank balance, owning neither stocks nor bonds, always broke, always battling my way out of debt, without money laid up for a rainy day and without even an insurance policy to provide for my family after I die. . . ." Such were the personal finances of the man known to be one of the great money-writers of his day.

But Hecht's career in the movies was simplicity itself next to his relationship with the Jews and with his own Jewishness. Not that he ever had great qualms about being a Jew. For the most part, it seems to have been

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a matter of indifference to him. His first wife was not Jewish, his second wife was. Formal religion appears to have played hardly any part in his upbringing. His was not the world of Irving Howe's fathers—socialist, labor union, left-wing idealistic—but instead was predominantly small business, or at any rate small-business-minded. In *A Child of the Century*, though he insists that "my family remained like a homeland in my heart," he also insists that "I have never lived 'as a Jew' or even among Jews."

The only one of Hecht's novels that still has the power, if not to enchant, then to disturb, *A Jew in Love*, would be instantly labeled anti-Semitic had it not been written by a Jew. The novel begins: "Jo Boshere (born Abe Nussbaum) was a man of thirty—a dark-skinned little Jew with a vulturous face, a reedy body, and a sense of posture." The descriptions that follow do not become more charitable.

Jo Boshere (the character is said to have been modeled in part on the publisher Horace Liveright, but there must be even more of Ben Hecht in him) is an intellectual and a successful New York publisher. But above all he is an egotist with a romantic conception of himself and an unappeasable need to dominate others. *A Jew in Love* has to do with Boshere's unrelenting attempts at such domination, particularly over women. Otherwise, it is plotless. One reads on with mild interest and strong disgust about such characters as the Broadway journalist Gabe Solomon (a miniature portrait, MacAdams reports, of George Jessel), whose "talk of women would have abashed a gynecologist." But more interesting than this sort of thing is Jo Boshere's violent rejection of Zionism. Boshere tells his sister that she is a Zionist " 'because you hate Jews, you're ashamed of being a Jew.' " And in the same conversation, he says:

> I know what this Jew Consciousness is, because I once had it. It's the consciousness of not being a normal social human being. Just as the taint of homosexuality gives a man the miserable feeling of not being entirely a man. Once in a while a Jew comes to light whose ego is stronger than his label, who has enough brains, character, genius to lift his soul out of the God damn slimy stranglehold of Jew consciousness.

The attack on Zionism in *A Jew in Love* is notable because roughly ten years later—owing to Adolf Hitler—Hecht would be on his way not only to becoming a Zionist but, as he candidly put it, a "propagandist" for the Irgun, the Jewish organization in Palestine pledged to remove the British from the region—by violence, among other means—and to form a Jewish state on both banks of the Jordan.

Hecht became involved with the Irgun through a column he wrote for the New York daily *PM* on the reluctance of important American Jews to speak out strongly against Hitler. Having been politicized by Hitler for the first time in his life, Hecht was shamed and outraged by this reluctance. He was driven to even greater rage when he learned that Joseph Kennedy, then ambassador to England, had warned the powerful figures in Hollywood to remain silent on the persecution of the Jews in Europe lest the war against Germany (in which the United States was anyway not yet engaged) come to seem "a Jewish war." To make an elaborate story simple, in response to this column, two members of the Irgun called on Hecht one afternoon to seek his support for their program to save the Jews of Europe by sending them to Palestine.

Although so far as is known Hecht saved no European Jews through his work with the Irgun, and although he did not advance the Irgun cause in any finally lasting way, he nevertheless proved very strong in the line of agitprop. He wrote a series of inflammatory newspaper ads variously attacking the State Department, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and all the major American Jewish organizations ("Hang and burn, but be quiet, Jews/ The world is busy with other news," ran the refrain to one such effort). He also organized a star-laden pageant about the Jews of Europe entitled *We Will Never Die* that filled Madison Square Garden two nights running and then went on to play Washington, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, and Los Angeles.

HECHT's actions were not without personal consequences. He turned out to have a knack for making enemies almost as great as his knack for making money—and in not much smaller numbers. Because of his Irgun connection, movies on which he worked were blacklisted throughout the United Kingdom. In Hollywood, never known as the capital of courage, he was now offered only half his former fees for screenplays, and then only if he would agree to work without credit. None of this slowed him down or caused him to reconsider his commitment. The famous cynic had turned into a passionate idealist.

Passionate, but not particularly well-informed. *Perfidy* (1961), Hecht's book about the postwar trial of Rudolf Kastner, the man who on behalf of the Jewish Agency negotiated with Adolf Eichmann for the lives of Hungarian Jews, shows both his strengths and weaknesses as a writer. No need to rehearse the intricate details of the Kastner trial here, but suffice it to say that Hecht, in 1961, used his book on the trial to reassert the Irgun line. This line held that during the war Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Sharett, and other leaders of the Labor party in Mandatory Palestine, of which Kastner was a high-ranking member, betrayed the Jews of Europe in order to gain concessions from the British, who at the time

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wanted no great influx of Jews into Palestine lest it upset relations with the oil-rich Arabs. In defending Kastner after the war, Hecht argues, Israel's government—that is to say, the Labor party—was in reality defending itself.

It is a devastating charge—that the state of Israel was built on the willingness of its leaders to allow the Jews of Europe to die—and one that Hecht, for all his considerable skill at marshaling evidence and his powers of phrasemaking and caricature, finally cannot make stick. Lucy S. Dawidowicz, reviewing *Perfidy* in these pages,* remarked that Hecht, being "neither a historian nor a chronicler," got a great deal askew, and she patiently sorted out his historical confusions, adding that she was disappointed to find that Hecht, "as a novelist and playwright," did not have more compassion for the complex plight of the people he was writing about.

But Ben Hecht was less a novelist and playwright than he was a journalist and a screenwriter, professions that emphasize the sensational and melodramatic over the complexities of history and the troubling mysteries of the human heart. After a life of writing, Ben Hecht was disqualified from writing well about the one subject in the world—perhaps the only subject in the world—he had come really to care about. Talent long misused has a way of wreaking its own revenge.

STILL, after one has chopped away at his work there remains something impressive about Ben Hecht. Such was his energy, his appetite for life, his odd courage, his self-awareness even of his own weaknesses, that he seems to require being judged by other than the usual standards. He was himself much more interesting than any character he ever created for the stage, screen, or fiction. Saying this is less a tribute to him as a writer than it is to him as an extraordinary man.

Ben Hecht died of a heart attack in his apartment in Manhattan on April 18, 1964, at the age of seventy-one. At the funeral service eulogies were read by Menachem Begin and Peter Bergson (both formerly of the Irgun), and the actors Luther Adler and George Jessel. It is comforting to recall that, back in the 1920's, when Jessel attempted to collaborate with Hecht on a play, Hecht told his friend Gene Fowler that he never met anyone "so eager to flaunt his stupidity, low-grade human values, and jackass vanities to the world." There is no business like show business.

* COMMENTARY, March 1962.

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Why College Sports

D. G. Myers

COLLEGIATE athletics, it is generally agreed, are a mess. And not merely from an educational point of view. By almost any measure, college sports are becoming increasingly difficult to justify. Although they are sometimes defended on the grounds of the publicity they bring to a school, athletics can as easily be a source of embarrassment as of glory. Within a matter of weeks at the University of Oklahoma last year, a young woman was gang-raped in the athletic dormitory, one football player shot another, and the star quarterback (who had appeared in anti-drug announcements) was arrested for selling cocaine. It seemed obvious, at least to those who concern themselves with such matters, that the athletic program at Oklahoma was out of control, removed from any sense of accountability, badly in need of reform. Nor was Oklahoma's program alone. At the University of Florida, fraud and financial misdealings in the sports department had become so commonplace and unsavory that Governor Bob Martinez proposed the creation of a statewide office to oversee the conduct of collegiate athletics.

The reform of college sports is clearly an idea whose time has come. No one expects athletic programs to clean themselves up: they have become too independent, too unrestrained, too powerful. At some universities, coaches now earn salaries two or three times higher than the highest-paid professor, higher even than the president. Student athletes are (in the phrase of Wayne Duke, former commissioner of the Big Ten) "compartmentalized": they live apart in specially reserved dormitories, train and practice in specially reserved facilities, and have scant contact with other students. Through the booster club, people who know little and care less about the work of a university are invited to have a hand in its activities. And perhaps as a direct result, almost anything is tolerated—from illegal cash payments to counterfeit grade reports—as long as the team is winning. Between 1984 and 1989, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) publicly reprimanded 83 programs for rules violations, but not even public opprobrium seemed to have much of an effect: another eight programs have been added to the number so far this year. As a successful football coach at a Western university explained, "I'll be fired for losing before I'm fired for cheating."*

It is time, say reformers, to turn things around. The problem, everyone agrees, is that college sports no longer have much to do with college education. And the solution that is proposed is either to make sports more genuinely collegiate, or to acknowledge the fact that they have become something else—a subvariety of professional sports—and put an end to the charade.

ONE set of proposed reforms would reemphasize the student in student athlete. "College football began as a recreation for undergraduates," Red Smith once wrote, "but it outgrew that role many years ago." The general effect of the proposed reforms would be to restore that role, specifically by means of an NCAA plan to set minimum academic standards for athletes who wish to play. On the face of it, the plan seems unobjectionable enough. Indeed, from the outside it is difficult to understand why anyone would have to *propose* the setting of minimum standards—an absence of standards having much the same effect upon universities that a lack of sweeping has on a floor. Yet the NCAA plan has been met with angry resistance. And this episode reveals a great deal about the likelihood of reform in college sports.

In 1983 the NCAA voted at its national convention to adopt Proposition 48, requiring athletes to score a combined 700 out of a possible 1600 points on the two Scholastic Aptitude Tests—the equivalent of a generous D. (Students receive a score of 400 merely for showing up and answering a single question. Last year, fewer than 30 percent of all who took the tests scored below 700.) Athletes who failed to reach the 700 mark would not be banned from competition, however. As "partial qualifiers," they would be eligible for a full athletic scholarship, but would be forbidden to practice with the team or suit up for a game until they had passed some eight classes. Then, at its 1989 convention, the NCAA proposed to tighten the rules further by putting an end to scholarships for "partial qualifiers." An athlete who scored below 700 on the SAT and wished to make up the deficiency by taking classes would have to pay his own way, just like any other student.

John Thompson, basketball coach at Georgetown University and coach of the 1988 U.S. Olympic basketball squad, immediately denounced the proposal, threatening to boycott several Big East Conference games in protest. Thompson was never explicit about the reasons for his objection, but others were not so circumspect or so

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* For a thoroughgoing indictment, see Murray Sperber's recent *College Sports Inc: The Athletic Department vs. the University*, Holt, 382 pp., $19.95.

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vague. John Chaney, basketball coach at Temple University, excoriated the NCAA proposal as racist. Harry Edwards, the former sports sociologist now working for the commissioner of big-league baseball, said the true purpose behind the higher academic standards was to prevent blacks from dominating college sports.

Thompson made good on his threat, walking off the court moments before tipoff in a game against Boston College. By doing so, he earned himself a reputation as a man of moral severity, for whom principle comes before victory. And this reputation has not gone unrewarded. The Denver Nuggets, a team in the professional National Basketball Association, offered Thompson part-ownership in the club if he would agree to be its general manager. When Thompson turned down the offer, Georgetown's president, the Reverend Leo J. O'Donovan, said, "Our whole university is delighted to know that this great man will be with us for the future." The great man apparently returns Georgetown's affection. At the NCAA convention in 1988, Thompson attacked a proposal to share revenues with less successful schools. "All the games that Georgetown plays in and all the money that Georgetown wins," he said, "I'm going on record as saying that I think should go to Georgetown." Of course, a considerable slice of the money also goes to Thompson: his base salary is $317,000.

Is IT racist to uphold academic standards, when black athletes disproportionately fail to meet them? Only if it is equally racist to uphold athletic standards. Thompson's teams at Georgetown have been disproportionately black, and disproportionately good. No one has suggested that Thompson set aside places for Jews or Asian-Americans, to take two groups glaringly underrepresented in big-time college sports. The need for minimum standards in basketball, and the irrelevance of any other criterion than an ability to excel at the game, are unspoken tenets of Thompson and his supporters. What they object to are not standards as such, only inconvenient ones.

The real trouble with the NCAA reforms is not that they are racially motivated, but that they are unlikely to work. It is not merely that coaches like Thompson and John Chaney oppose them. The reforms are doomed to fail because they misinterpret the true character of sports. Thus it is not unusual for the same sports writers and editorialists to approve of Thompson's opposition to the reforms and disapprove of his opposition to revenue-sharing with schools that win less money. But Thompson is entirely consistent: his interests lie in securing the best athletes *and* enjoying the rewards that come with athletic triumph. It is the reformers of college sports who are inconsistent.

The would-be reformers do not understand why human beings play games. The late Woody Hayes, football coach for two-and-a-half decades at Ohio State University, said it better perhaps than anyone: "I don't think it's possible to be too intent on winning. If we played for any other reason, we would be totally dishonest." The various plans to reform college sports are, if not totally, at least partially dishonest. For they pretend that sports are played for some other reason than to win.

The nature of this grander intention remains undefined, perhaps because (whatever it may be) it is not what attracts huge crowds and national television coverage. Attendance at football games in the Southeastern Conference averaged 63,600 last year; 325 college basketball games were broadcast on national TV during the 1988-89 season. Numbers like these are not to be explained by the need to circulate examples of moral severity, to develop a well-rounded character in young men, or even to provide opportunities for blacks from low-income backgrounds. These are afterthoughts. In sports, as Santayana observed, "Only the supreme is interesting: the rest has value only in leading to it or reflecting it." And the supreme is measured in victories.

SINCE college athletes are intent on winning, then, and since this intent might be termed the professional mode in sports, why not acknowledge the truth about college sports, and, while keeping them at academic institutions, openly professionalize them?

In a recent article in the *Washington Monthly*, Louis Barbash proposes a system, to be regulated by federal law, in which the players on college teams would be reclassified as "non-student professionals" at a salary of $15,000 a year. Last year a similar scheme, to pay football players at the University of Nebraska, was endorsed by both houses of the Nebraska legislature before being vetoed by Governor Kay Orr.

These measures, though desperate, have several things to recommend them. First, they recognize the essential falsity of the distinction between collegiate and professional. The true distinction is between those who pursue a sport seriously, full-time, in order to outshine all others, and those who do not. In this regard, college athletes are virtually indistinguishable from professionals. Secondly, the professionalization of college sports would at the very least correct the injustice of the present system, in which (as Donald Kennedy, president of Stanford University, has put it) athletes provide revenue-generating services for their schools without receiving anything lasting in return.

Yet the idea is absurd, because it is blind to the financial reality of college sports. "One of the great myths is that colleges are getting rich from sports," notes Robert Atwell, president of the American Council on Education. "They are not." In fact, most universities lose money on their athletic programs. "Over 90 percent of the schools in [big-time college sports] are in deficit budgets," says Frank Windegger, athletic director at Texas Christian University.

EVEN if the money to pay college athletes could be found, though, a larger question must be answered—namely, why should a system of professional athletics be affiliated with universities at all? For the truth is that the requirements of athletics and academics operate

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at cross purposes, and the attempt to play both games at once serves only to reduce the level of performance of each.

It is not just that academic standards must be lowered and debased in order to admit ballplayers into college. It is also true that athletic standards are compromised and ultimately corrupted when college students play ball. To demand a certain SAT score or a certain number of credit hours from athletes is rather like looking for a wife who is not only beautiful and brilliant but has the right astrological sign, too. When an irrelevant criterion becomes paramount, the inevitable result is the humiliation of quality.

And this is why it is to be marveled at that universities continue to have anything to do with sports. The two are separate enterprises, to be judged by separate criteria. It is significant that team uniforms are never embossed with the official seal of a university, which represents its authority to grant degrees; instead they are adorned with a special insignia of the team's own. For college sports, the university is not an educational institution at all: it is merely a locus, a means of coordinating the different aspects of the sporting enterprise.

More than 1,200 American universities and colleges and 1,000 junior colleges now field teams in sports ranging from football and basketball to synchronized swimming, handball, polo, field hockey, cycling, and power lifting. It may be hard to believe that, severed from its academic connections, much of this enterprise would remain intact. But it is equally hard to understand why, aside from its need to remain intact, the collegiate sporting enterprise requires academic connections at all.

Music

Where the New Music Went Wrong

Samuel Lipman

Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
—SHAKESPEARE, Sonnet 73

BY NOW, musicians and music lovers alike are aware that few compositions of enduring value have been produced in the last forty years or so. They are further aware that those which seem to have lasted—the works, for example, of composers as different as Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich in Russia and Aaron Copland and Samuel Barber in America—have been written by artists whose personalities and styles were formed as long ago as World War I and the ensuing two decades. Of more recent contributions to the permanent repertory, we now see nothing.

Thus, whether one looks at orchestra concerts, solo and chamber music recitals, or operatic productions, one discovers a concentration on pre-World War II repertory, with a strong favoritism shown for the music from Bach to Tchaikowsky. It is not that music by composers coming to maturity after World War II has not been played. On the contrary, it has been tried everywhere, and everywhere it has been found wanting. Indeed, so universally negative has the verdict been on post-1945 music that even the good and important works written in this period have been unfairly tarred with the general failure.

I do not claim originality for what I have just said. The enemies of the new music are legion, and even number important critics among their ranks. What is striking, however, is that an awareness of the deplorable state of musical affairs has gradually been creeping into the discussions of those responsible for the situation in the first place: the composers, and their admirers, who together had earlier claimed that the only way to creative salvation was the way of the new.

One of the more striking signs of this self-doubt among the once-confident is *Trackings*, a recent collection of interviews with 26 composers assembled by the American conductor Richard Dufallo.* From 1972 to 1979, Dufallo was the director of the 20th-century music series at the Juilliard School in New York. More directly relevant to *Trackings*, from 1970 to 1985 he was artistic director of the Aspen Music Festival's Conference on Contemporary Music. It is largely from among the composers he invited to Aspen in this fifteen-year period that he has selected his interviewees, and it is clear from his own autobiographical reminiscences, with which the book is generously supplied, that he experienced the opportunities for presenting

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* Oxford University Press, 418 pp., $35.00.

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new music there as exciting and (until the Aspen Festival's internecine squabbles of the mid 1980's) uniquely rewarding.

I myself witnessed much of what Dufallo describes. My own years as a faculty artist at the Aspen Music Festival matched his closely, and I appeared in the Conference on Contemporary Music as a piano soloist under Dufallo's direction, playing with him Igor Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Wind Orchestra. I also appeared on three other occasions as a soloist in Aspen concerts connected with the conference, playing Elliott Carter's Piano Concerto with Gerard Schwarz, William Schuman's Piano Concerto with Varujan Kojian, and Olivier Messiaen's *Oiseaux exotiques* with Barry Jekowsky.

IN THE early years of Dufallo's tenure in Aspen I attended many, if not most, of his concerts. As time passed, however, I became affected at these concerts by a curious combination of boredom and irritation, and at the end I must admit that I had quite given up on what Dufallo was trying to do in Aspen.

What he was trying to do was nothing less than provide a conspectus of what today would be called "cutting-edge" musical life. Toward this end he invited to Aspen (and now, in *Trackings*, he interviews) such composers from both sides of the Atlantic as Gilbert Amy, Earle Brown, Elliott Carter, George Crumb, Peter Maxwell Davies, David Del Tredici, Jacob Druckman, Witold Lutoslawski, Krzysztof Penderecki, Bernard Rands, Aribert Reimann, George Rochberg, Peter Schat, Michael Tippett, Richard Wernick, and Iannis Xenakis. In a limited bow to more traditional music of American origin, Dufallo also brought to Aspen (and interviews in his book) Aaron Copland, Ned Rorem, and William Schuman. In addition, *Trackings* contains interviews with some true avant-garde heavyweights who never made it to Aspen: Pierre Boulez, John Cage, Friedrich Cerha, Lukas Foss, Mauricio Kagel, Gyorgy Ligeti, and Karlheinz Stockhausen.

It would be easy to quibble with Dufallo's list. Where, if it is meant to be truly inclusive, are such important American composers as David Diamond and Hugo Weisgall? And if there is a particular notion of music being advocated here, just what are masters of an older ideal of American music like Copland, Rorem, and Schuman doing in this company of avant-gardists? These reservations aside, however, Dufallo has managed to get down the words of just about everyone in America and Europe who made the new music what it was through the 1960's and up until the irruption in the early 70's of post-modern minimalism in the work of Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass. Of these later developments he has little of significance to say.

DUFALLO's cutoff, unwelcome though it undoubtedly will be to the freshest fellow-travelers of the new sounds, makes historical sense. By the beginning ot the 1970's, the most significant post-World War II musical developments had been born and had reached maturity. At the center of these developments was an unholy obsession with the combination of freedom and order: the desire at one and the same time to be free in composition from all previous constraints of traditional practice and experience, and to control through intellectual means every facet of the music being written. The struggle between those two principles was at no point a fight to win an audience, whether sophisticated or otherwise. It was instead a battle between composers for the hearts and minds of their colleagues, a battle fought between the followers of John Cage and Anton Webern. The conflict was, it is true, not unprecedented: behind Cage and Webern stood the doughty figures of (for Cage) Erik Satie and the Dadaists, and (for Webern) Arnold Schoenberg.

Despite all the bitterness after 1945 between these rival schools of compositional thought, not everything was in dispute. Whether an avant-garde composer chose freedom or order, or some fantastic personal mixture, one point was agreed upon: all means of music-making, very much including at the one end primitive noisemakers and at the other the most advanced developments of electronic technology, were not only to be allowed, but greatly to be encouraged.

This set of intellectual choices, based on the will of the artist rather than the satisfaction of an audience, was at the heart of the contemporary musical scene Dufallo chose to represent not merely in his work in Aspen, but in his entire career as a conductor. After serving an apprenticeship with the composer, conductor, and pianist Lukas Foss in Los Angeles and Buffalo, Dufallo decided by 1960 to stake out a musical position of his own. He puts this decision in terms curiously reminiscent of the collecting scene in the visual arts as we have known it in the last three decades: "I felt as though previously, I had only been looking in the 'store window.' Now was the moment to go in and 'buy' something for myself." And for Dufallo, "buying" musical phenomena quite properly meant playing them every chance he got.

Though the prevailing quality Dufallo brings to his dealings with his chosen composers is a kind of boyish enthusiasm, there is remarkably little evidence of such enthusiasm, boyish or otherwise, in what his composers have to tell him. Some of them do look back with fondness on the world that shaped what Dufallo perhaps overmuch refers to as their "musical genetic code." For example, the American composer Earle Brown, a writer of "open-form" works in which performers choose, within rather wide limits, what will actually be played, reflects on Darmstadt, the German *locus classicus* of late 1950's avant-garde music: "I don't know of any place in which so many significant works and/or aesthetic attitudes were allowed to flower and mix." On the other hand, Pierre Boulez, currently the director of the French government's new-music *apparat*, says: "The universe of Darmstadt lasted ten years for me. And now, who cares?"

Boulez, at least, is still on the avant-garde bandwagon: he evinces much joy in the possibilities now made available by recent electronic developments in the real-time manipulation of musical

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sounds during performances themselves. But for other composers in *Trackings*—one is tempted to say the majority—the legacy of the 1950's and 1960's is something to be taken seriously, and to be condemned. For the American David Del Tredici, known in recent years for his gigantic (many would call them wildly overblown) tone-poems based on the Alice stories of Lewis Carroll, serialism, the ideology on which post-World War II musical order was founded, has left a ruin in its wake:

> [I]f you write something atonal, dissonant, chance-filled, you can often get away with murder. It's more difficult to separate the good from the bad; standards are not quite so clear. But if it's tonal, there's just too much good music people know and love.

One of the most interesting of Dufallo's interviews is with the Dutch composer Peter Schat, who wrote a hokey and would-be sensationalist opera *Houdini*, presented by Dufallo in Aspen in 1979. For Schat, Schoenberg's twelve-tone theory, in which no note could be repeated until all the others had been sounded, was both a reaction to political fascism and a kind of musical socialism:

> [I]t was not a law that is inside the music. It was a law that was inside the numbers. You count. Thou shalt count! That is the law of Schoenberg. That is not a musical law, but it is a law. And the whole of serialism came from that law: thou shalt count. The tones, the rhythms, the durations, the timbres, what have you. Thou shalt count. And do it in the computer, also. That's not musical. And that's the whole mistake of serialism. Schoenberg's idea of dodecaphony—that all tones have equal rights, that they must have equal opportunities—*that is a stupid idea! Can you believe it?* . . . Incredible! That is Socialism, and we know Socialism does not work.

IT CANNOT BE sufficiently stressed that *Trackings* is not in any sense a testimonial to the power of beauty in music. On the evidence of this book, it is not the search for beauty that moves most contemporary composers (or a conductor like Dufallo who plays them), for beauty is on this occasion, as always, an absent guest at the avant-garde music table. Under these conditions, the very process of making music becomes a struggle, perhaps even an alienated struggle. This certainly seems to account for the sad answer the Greek composer Iannis Xenakis, a writer of music of stupefying thickness and turgidity, gives to Dufallo's not unreasonable question, "Why do you compose?"

> I compose because . . . well, I could have done other things in my life, too. I was interested in many things. But then finally I decided to do music, essentially. And I decided to do that because I thought I would be less unhappy doing music than doing other things. That's it. There is no other reason.

But if *Trackings* is not a testimonial to the power of beauty, it is surely a testimonial to the power of ideas. The influence of Schoenberg on these composers, an influence that hangs heavy over them, even when they reject it, does not come from the *sound* of his music, but from the suggestive force of his thinking. And what is true in the case of Schoenberg is true for the role of thought in general. The American composer George Rochberg, a serialist in the early stages of his career but an anti-serialist for many years now, describes what he wants from the work of others: "I need ideas. What draws me to a composer, what draws me to a piece, is the nature of the ideas." For another of Dufallo's composers, the Austrian Friedrich Cerha (who completed the unfinished Act III of Alban Berg's opera *Lulu*), important ideas need not even be musical; Cerha looks to the cybernetic Norbert Wiener for insights into musical systems.

IF THERE is a prevailing tone to be discerned in this long book, it is one of quiet creative desperation. However, this tone never receives full expression, for professional optimism always keeps breaking in. When Dufallo attempts to raise the issue with the German composer Aribert Reimann, who has written some of the most depressing music of our time (including a setting of Shakespeare's *King Lear*), Reimann trivializes the issue:

> *Duffalo*: It's interesting to hear you be so confident about the pieces you are writing. I have been speaking to a number of composers; and I must say many of them are in a crisis. The rejection and self-criticism that is going on in composers today is really quite severe. You are not in a crisis?
>
> *Reimann*: I was, in the first four months of the year. I thought I would never compose again. . . . And then something happened in my life and I started very timidly (*vorsichtig*) in April to compose again.

It is difficult not to have some sympathy for the defiance with which Dufallo continues throughout *Trackings* to defend the work of his favored composers: "By now, there are composers who deserve one-man shows. These are our 20th-century classicists. They represent our tradition, *and we don't have any other.*" But it simply will not do to say that we must accept the post-1945 tradition because we have no other. For we do have another musical tradition. Musicians and audiences alike love that tradition, which goes back even before Bach and continues not just through Mozart and Beethoven and their immediate descendants but extends into a wide range of 20th-century music stretching from Bartok and Stravinsky to Prokofiev, Shostakovich, and Copland. Let me repeat: this is music that musicians want to play and audiences want to hear.

As for the post-1945 tradition—the avant-garde so zealously advocated by Dufallo—it has not only failed but has been seen to have failed. Insofar as Dufallo's composers recognize this, they seem to ascribe it to social causes. As with all such general assignments of responsibility, blaming society has the predictable result of absolving individuals—in this case individual composers—from responsibility.

Thus, the French composer Gilbert Amy, a former disciple of Boulez, finds his style cramped by petroleum shortages and associated phenomena:

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I'm sure that an economic analysis would be a good one to make, because modernity really belongs to the prosperous years. Nineteen seventy-three was the year of the first oil crisis and recession, and that started a big decline in the arts. Economy and the arts are closely related, but one must consider that the economic issues are in the first rank. All of music is economically based: the orchestra, the star system, the size of the orchestra, the number of rehearsals. Everything is against adventure!

For Elliott Carter, renowned for writing music so complicated that even sophisticated listeners can discover little in it to comprehend, post-1945 music only mirrors conditions in the society from which it springs. When Dufallo asks him why his music changed after World War II, from what I would call a kind of Coplandesque Americanism to its later complexity, Carter replies:

There's a long *London Weekend* TV show about this. . . . A camera crew came here to this house and took pictures. And in the end, the producer, Alan Benson, said, "You made it perfectly clear that when the war was over, nothing really stopped and nothing had been changed; that a state of anxiety remained in the society. The end of the war was not the end of the situation." And he said that explained why the music changed so much. We had hoped for a new society and a new world emerging and suddenly realized that it wasn't going to happen.

An unhappy society, then, makes for unhappy composers, and unhappy composers write unhappy music. Lacking in the logical chain, alas, is its final deduction: unhappy music makes for unhappy audiences.

This line of thought immediately raises several questions. What if Carter's argument, including the conclusion I have drawn from it, is correct? What if audiences do in fact sense the chaotic realities of society, and the personal sufferings of composers, that lie behind so much of postwar music? What if audiences do want to look back—or rather hear back—to what they perceive as a better time and a better world? What if audiences do not want to accept the music of even those composers who, like Del Tredici, are trying to supply them with what might be called a new old music?

The answers to these questions provide no good news for contemporary composers. Audiences are indeed quick to sense the nature of the world out of which art comes. Of course they sometimes tend to idealize the past, as do we all. But they can hardly be blamed for picking out the best features of the past and cleaving to the art which makes those features vivid today. Great music, even when it is scarcely optimistic in programmatic content, does evoke attributes—love, justice, and order, to name just a few—that we wish to transfer from the past to the present. The very idea of the finished work of musical art, shapely, beautiful, and perfect, in itself powerfully suggests the possibility of a better world.

There is a profusion of such works of musical art. The great composers—one thinks immediately of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms—were inexhaustibly prolific. And there were many composers, just slightly below this exalted rank, who also left us a stream of marvelous compositions. Indeed, a lifetime is too short to do more than sample the great musical repertory of the past. It is obvious, then, that for our musical satisfaction, we do not *need* new music.

However, living composers, now as always, can hardly feel content with this state of affairs: hang the past, they say, and get on with the present. So far as they are concerned, audiences do not have a right to choose the past. Audiences must support—and even love—new music not because it is great but because it is new, not on grounds of art but on grounds of contemporaneity in and of itself.

Richard Dufallo and his composers thus ultimately come to us not as givers of art or even of wisdom, but as zealous crusaders for the artistic and intellectual lives they have chosen to live. They ask for much, but it is the judgment of the world in which they must swim that they have given little. As time passes, fewer and fewer will be found to reverse that harsh judgment.

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In Urban America

THE CLOSEST OF STRANGERS: LIBERALISM AND THE POLITICS OF RACE IN NEW YORK. By JIM SLEEPER. *Norton. 300 pp. $21.95.*
DEVIL'S NIGHT: AND OTHER TRUE TALES OF DETROIT. By ZE'EV CHAFETS. *Random House. 241 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by SCOTT MCCONNELL

THERE is an almost old-fashioned tone to Jim Sleeper's impassioned dirge for New York's lost civic culture. Running throughout *The Closest of Strangers* are phrases like "mutual obligation" and "social reciprocity" that ring with a sort of Scandinavian earnestness, carrying with them the flavor of socialist movements from what now seems a remote past.

Yet in Sleeper's hands such phrases retain a moral energy and even a certain freshness. For once, they are not used merely to shame and excoriate the capitalists—in this case, the real-estate developers, yuppie bond traders, and other participants in New York's high-consumption culture during the Reagan years. Sleeper does criticize such people, but he also turns the language of civic obligation and common endeavor against other groups who, to an infinitely greater degree than Donald Trump, deserve blame for despoiling New York City. Thus, in *The Closest of Strangers* Sleeper has seized the idiom of Left-liberalism to assail a roster of enemies on the Left—from the city's entrenched "affirmative-action elites," to its "professional blacks" (as opposed to black professionals), to the white radicals who worked to flood the welfare rolls and undermine the many socially responsible voices in the black community, to the liberals who dreamed up perpetually more ingenious apologetics for violent crime. The result is an outstanding and remarkably honest book, and perhaps the most persuasive analysis of black-white relations to have appeared in a generation.

As Sleeper takes considerable (and sometimes gratuitous) pains to make clear, he is himself no conservative. An immigrant to New York (from Boston) and a socialist of the *Dissent* variety, he served a long apprenticeship with local community papers and liberal politicians before becoming an editor at New York *Newsday*. His main point of reference is the beginning of the 1960's, a time when New York was well on its way to developing what he calls a "sense of interracial fair play." During that period, Sleeper asserts, conservative white ethnics, even if they did not love blacks, could be won over by the principle of fairness: give a guy an even break. But this developing consensus was beaten to death as liberal activists fresh from civil-rights victories in the deep South moved to "integrate" New York: using court orders for experiments in forced busing and scatter-site housing that brought massive disruption and violent crime to many of the city's outer-borough neighborhoods, and spurring a generally quiet but nonetheless real sense of white resentment. Worse, the push for "integration" was accompanied by a rise both in the city's crime rate and in the temperature of black rhetoric. All this was exacerbated further by the 1960's assault on traditional middle-class social and cultural norms, in which some influential white liberals again played a central role.

By the mid-1960's, the consensus was showing deep cracks. In New York, a key challenge came from the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), founded by two white professors, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward. The group's short-term strategy was to flood the welfare system with demands it was legally obligated to meet, in order to force its collapse, increase racial polarization, and bring about a radical realignment in American politics. This strategy half-way succeeded. During the 1960's the NWRO helped to triple New York City's welfare caseload to nearly a million recipients. It was abetted in its task by a liberal administration in City Hall (John Lindsay's) that was more than willing to shoulder the load because the city was then awash in federal anti-poverty funds.

WITH the swelling of the welfare rolls came an effort to redefine welfare itself. Public assistance was now a "right"; its recipients, who lived in "occupied colonies," were not to be considered under any obligation to adhere to standards of behavior imposed by "white" society. (In fact, managers of the city's vast public-housing tracts were no longer allowed to screen tenants for drug abuse or other criminal behavior.) Those who protested the new definitions, or who raised warning flags about the increased incidence of pathology among the poor, such as the collapse of the two-parent family, were shouted down as "racist."

To illustrate the long-term impact of such developments, Sleeper cites the lament of a public-housing resident in today's New York who wonders why welfare workers cannot deny apartments to women who keep their children home from school, abuse them, or rent spare rooms to crack addicts. And he quotes a tenant leader who charges, "Government policy has ended up creating a lost generation of children."

Such children have made their presence felt in many of the neighborhoods that once served as the world's best civic nurturing grounds. Sleeper's own neighborhood at the western edge of Brooklyn's Park Slope was a community which had shaped two generations of Italian immigrants. When he lived there it was experiencing "transition." First the large apart-

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ment building fronting the neighborhood's brownstones suddenly acquired a majority of welfare tenants—after its absentee landlord found that government shelter allowances exceeded what he could get under the rent-control laws. The same thing happened to a number of smaller buildings. The Italians who had been "planted" in the neighborhood for fifty years began to mutter:

> [They] knew—and these were, indeed, incontestable facts—that at eight each morning, when the men in their families had gone to work and their sidewalks and stoops were already hosed down and the wash was hanging out back, garbage covered the sidewalks in front of the "welfare" buildings, whose residents were sleeping off another night of noise and mayhem. The nightly screams and shatterings of glass, the inevitable police sirens and bubblegum lights ricocheting through the Italians' blinds and around their parlors, had brought the block to the edge of war. Puerto Rican and black boys urinated against the fronts of the block's two abandoned buildings in broad daylight and strode down the street bearing boom boxes at full blast.

In such form comes real insight into New York's racial realities—at least as whites perceive them. But the left-wing side of Sleeper is unable to leave things there. He adds another culprit to the dreadful mix—the churnings of the regulated but still highly capitalist real-estate market. In his Park Slope neighborhood, young upper-middle-class professionals were moving in as well, in many cases making the Italians offers for their brownstones they could not refuse, and pricing the neighborhood out of the reach of the children of those who had built it. And to accommodate the needs of this new professional class, the absentee landlord turned the one-time "welfare building" into a rehabilitated cooperative.

Sleeper the left-liberal analyst wishes that the welfare tenants and the Italians could have banded together to form a common front against the real-estate speculators and yuppie homesteaders. But in a hundred or so words of vivid description Sleeper the writer has already demonstrated why such an alliance could never emerge.

HEIGHTENING the tensions that percolated in the city's neighborhoods was the growing power and assertiveness of New York's own variant of black-nationalist ideology. The term itself is not quite apt, but there is as yet no better one to describe the unique brand of ethnic assertiveness, blanket claims that "racism" lurks in every crevice of New York's civic culture, frequent lapses into anti-Semitism (and in, recent years, anti-Asian racism), and sometimes simple dishonesty that seems, some days, to crowd out every other mode of black political expression in New York. And no one has done a better job of pulling apart the various strands of this new belief system than Sleeper, who also mourns the fact that it has been used as an assault weapon against a disproportionately Jewish white civic elite which was (and in part remains) more favorably disposed to black economic and professional advances than any other urban elite in the country.

One such strand is affirmative action, which in practice has meant the subversion and discrediting of objective standards for determining academic performance or job suitability. In this connection, Sleeper brings up a training manual distributed to employees of the New York State Insurance Fund, which informs them that "All White individuals in our society are racist. Even if a White is totally free of all conscious racial prejudice he remains a racist, for he receives benefits distributed by White Racist society through its institutions." Assertions like this, Sleeper correctly notes, aim not at transcending racism but at providing blacks with a "unique protected status" within the American polity, justifying their turning the tables on whites by kicking them out of jobs they mean to take for themselves. The manual's message is that blacks can use what "what little moral advantage they have gained from persecution to draw a color line right back against whites."

The same spirit has been displayed more obviously in the public careers of the black lawyers Alton Maddox, Jr. and C. Vernon Mason, who were well-known in New York long before they helped publicize the fabricated story of Tawana Brawley's abduction and rape; Sleeper cites in particular their behavior in a previous case in which they represented blacks who had been chased by a gang of white youths in Howard Beach, and one of the blacks was run over by a car. In both episodes, the two repeatedly made racially inflammatory and blatantly false assertions.

But what fuels Sleeper's despair is not so much the lies themselves as the widespread support these two lawyers enjoy in the black community. He recalls the decision of students at the City University's law school to give C. Vernon Mason a public-service award at a moment when it was plain he was trying to obstruct an investigation of Tawana Brawley's "charges"; the decision was rescinded only after a debate in which white law students, largely leftist, were labeled racist by their peers for questioning whether a man who was perpetrating a fraud on New York's public should be given such an award.

In another variant of the same syndrome, Sleeper cites the experience of a friend, a white socialist activist engaged in a workshop with a group of middle-class black *educators*, who had apparently convinced themselves that the drug wars in the black community were the result of a white genocidal conspiracy. From such vignettes, and others, Sleeper concludes that a dismayingly large slice of New York City's black elite has embraced a political world view in which life is defined simply as a perpetual struggle against a white racist devil. This "separate reality" is consistently disseminated in the city's black newspapers and on its black radio stations, and is pushed by several of its elected politicians. Mason and Maddox are treated as icons not so much despite their dishonesty as because of it.

In closing, Sleeper enters a plea for a black "truth squad," composed of the city's black newspap-

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ers and powerful cultural figures like Spike Lee, that would call Mason and Maddox and other racial provocateurs to account. For "it is long past time," he writes, "for the ordinary black people who are standing in job lines, ready to share society's burdens as well as its rewards, to demand of their leaders a change in course; for the politics of paroxysm, grievance, and conspiracy is clearly not working."

THIS is nothing if not a fair challenge, but it points in a direction in which New York does not seem headed. Ze'ev Chafets's provocative *Devil's Night: And Other True Tales of Detroit*, whatever else it accomplishes, shows there are other urban models for blacks to strive for besides Sleeper's vision of a multiethnic city where "interracial fair play" reigns as a civic ideal. There is, specifically, a black-power model, according to which blacks take political control and whites and other ethnic minorities simply leave the city.

That is what happened in Detroit, which in the decade after the 1967 riots experienced the most rapid white exodus in American urban history. A relatively prosperous city with a white majority in 1962, Detroit a decade later was a town with a black majority and a militant black mayor; a half-dozen years after that, there were virtually no whites remaining. As one former city official explained it, "The riot never stopped in Detroit. Both the criminals and the cops understood it was a whole new ball game. In the 70's, it was like a gang war between the blacks and the cops, and the blacks won."

This is one perspective on contemporary Detroit—suitably toned down, it is probably mainstream America's view of the Motor City. But the flight did not include only whites, or the city's once considerable population of Chaldean Arabs. The black middle class has also been deserting. By the 1990 census, the city's population had dipped below the million mark—half of what it was a generation ago. The city is so empty that reporters from one newspaper play a game called "King of the Corner"—the winner being the person who can stand on a downtown intersection during what used to be morning rush hour and look four ways without seeing a single living soul.

But Chafets also finds another Detroit, a "separate reality" indeed. He himself returned to the city of his roots as an expatriate, having emigrated from the nearby suburb of Pontiac to Israel in 1967, when he was twenty. He knows well the idiom of white resentment and fear of black crime—his grandfather, a Detroit shopkeeper, was murdered by a black in a robbery attempt. But that is not the story which interests him. Instead, Detroit attracts him as an example of an autonomous territory built on ethnic self-assertion and surrounded by hostile neighbors (the white suburbs)—a black city-state in the heart of the Middle West. Detroit for him is not just a black town but a virtual third-world country, with showcase projects and its own internalized history which understands the 1967 riot as a quasi-nationalist insurrection against colonial rule. Detroit is a place, Chafets writes, where "blacks can live in a sympathetic black-oriented milieu, where they can forget about being black, because everyone is."

Chafets compares Detroit to Israel only once, early on, while noting that—as in the Middle East—the ideological and "tribal" aspects of the rivalries between residents of Detroit and its neighboring suburbs have tended actually to take the edge off the hatreds, rendering them somewhat abstract and impersonal. Black Detroiters and white suburbanites rarely rub shoulders, but when they do, Chafets claims, they tend to get along rather amicably.

This, then, is *Devil's Night:* a sympathetic exploration of the psyche of black Detroit through conversations with Detroiters of every stripe, from political leaders to welfare mothers to artists and preachers. Chafets does it all ex-

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tremely well. He has a great eye for the telling detail, seems to make friends easily, and has an enviable ability to get his subjects to open up to him. He also seems to have retained much of his own youthful admiration of blacks: there is in this book a kind of giddy, beatnik envy of black style, black athletic and musical prowess, black ability to live in the present without undue fealty to the demands of mortgage and career. It helps that Chafets seems to bear no scars of disappointment or disillusion from anything that has happened in American race relations over the past twenty years.

Yes, hundreds, even thousands of Detroit youths have been killed by their peers for drugs, or for nothing at all. Yes, there is an organization, Save Our Sons and Daughters (SOSAD), that serves to bring solace to the parents of murdered children. (Its organizer attributes the plague to a white genocidal conspiracy.) Yes, Detroit is a poor and extremely violent place, economically dependent on state and federal funds, an almost completely subsidized third-world metropolis in the American heartland. (One wishes Chafets had said more about how the city meets its payroll.) Yes, luxury apartment buildings provide armed guards to escort guests to and from their cars. But Chafets's portrayal of the emotional rewards experienced by blacks who live and hold power there is nevertheless convincing. It seems that freedom from everyday racial tensions—the tensions of the mixed neighborhood and the mixed workplace, of the battles over school curriculum and job qualifications—has lifted a burden from everyone's shoulders. The men and women portrayed in the pages of *Devil's Night* seem in many ways happier people than New Yorkers—of any color—caught in their racially charged everyday situations.

At the close of *Devil's Night* Chafets cheerfully cites two observers who claim to see the American urban future in Detroit's present. "We're twenty years ahead of Chicago, forty years ahead of New York," says a white activist priest who has remained. This assertion will be tested by future demographic and immigration patterns as much as by politics. Its truth is hardly self-evident; and if it does turn out to be true, some vigorous counter-assertion by whites and others could hardly be staved off for long.

Certainly, to anyone committed to the old liberal promise of the civil-rights era, the prospect sketched in *Devil's Night* must seem nothing less than an abomination, dispiriting beyond words. Yet there are far too many days when New York City seems to offer more evidence to support that vision of America's urban future than the integrationist hopes of Jim Sleeper.

Spy Stories

By Way of Deception. By Victor Ostrovsky and Claire Hoy. *St. Martin's. 371 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by
Angelo M. Codevilla

When the government of Israel asked a Canadian court to prevent the publication of *By Way of Deception* it guaranteed a *succès de scandale*. The book has sold some 500,000 copies, its authors have been interviewed around the world, and its message—Israel is evil and no friend of America—has spread. Yet the book is so badly written, its logic is so tortured, its evidentiary base is so lacking, that if not for the scandal, no serious reader would have paid to plow through it. The Israeli government obviously wanted to prevent the revelation of the names of some of its own intelligence operatives, and the identification of some of its agents in Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. It should have known well enough to cut its losses.

Victor Ostrovsky was a trainee in the Mossad, Israel's intelligence-collection and covert-action agency, between January 1983 and March 1986. His knowledge of intelligence in general and of the Mossad in particular is limited to what he picked up in training courses and in lunchroom talk. Nor does he integrate that little amount of special knowledge into a lucid picture of the world. Nor does Claire Hoy, a journalist, bother trying to make a coherent account of what Ostrovsky has told him. They simply dump observations on the reader pell-mell.

The book really has only two parts: Ostrovsky's first-hand account of his time as a Mossad trainee, and a description of ten events in which the Mossad played a role. The first part—although it contains a lot of wild speculation on things Ostrovsky knows nothing about—is obviously based on lecture notes and course handouts. This is thin, banal gruel ("The days were divided into five blocks, from 8 to 10 A.M., 10 to 11, 11 to 1, 2 to 3, and 3 to 8 P.M. We had regular 20-minute breaks, while lunch was between 1 and 2 P.M."), but as a narrative still connected to reality. By contrast, the accounts of world events are on a level somewhere between the *National Enquirer, Mother Jones,* and Lyndon LaRouche—that is to say, it is difficult to figure out what parts of his stories are for real, if any.

Since the book has no footnotes, the reader must take the authors at their word, or not at all. A reader both serious and reasonably well-informed will quickly find enough outrages to fact and logic to warrant doubting everything the book says. According to the authors, for example, the Mossad's expert opinion is that Lee Harvey Oswald could not possibly have shot John F. Kennedy from the Texas Book Depository building. Why? Shooting a similar target 88 yards away with a high-powered rifle fitted with a 4x scope proved beyond the capacity of every Mossad man who tried it. Well, any hunter knows that is a no-miss shot. Again, according to the book, a large plastic-wrapped container (which Ostrovsky was not allowed to examine), being flown from the Far East through Israel to Panama, contained drugs. The evidence? "We

Angelo M. Codevilla, *a fellow of the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, is co-author, with Roy Godson, of the forthcoming* Informing Statecraft: Intelligence for a New Century (*Free Press*).

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weren't middlemen for weapons from the Far East. It couldn't have been anything else but drugs." Then there is the story about the Mossad informing Western intelligence services that certain types of locks are unpickable. But anybody who knows anything about locks knows that professionals rate them by numbers that stand for the *seconds* required to pick them. And how about this for logic? The Mossad "had a man with a British passport living in Djakarta, for example, working under cover. That means the Indonesian government knew he was with the Mossad."

Ostrovsky's general contention is that the Mossad is made up of a bunch of semi-competent but wholly amoral people whose devotion to Israel is so selfish that anyone, especially Americans, with whom they get involved stands a good chance of getting hurt. Some of the "counts" against the Mossad are of the dog-bites-man variety. Thus the evil Israelis would get a third-world government "hooked" on arms supplies, and then the "Mossad man" would tell the country's leader "that he must take, for instance, some agricultural equipment as well." Equally shocking is the disclosure that the Mossad keeps detailed track of the movement of PLO officials throughout the world. (Perhaps it should be tracking the migration of storks?) With regard to the use of deadly force, the Mossad teaches that "you have to forget everything you learned about fairness." In other words, "in a situation where there is going to be shooting, . . . a bystander will be witnessing your death or someone else's . . . in these situations it's kill or be killed." Ostrovsky and Hoy take this as evidence that Israel's rule is "screw somebody else"; others might take it as simple common sense.

The events the book describes are bizarre. According to one story Ostrovsky and Hoy tell, for instance, the PLO planned to assassinate Prime Minister Golda Meir by shooting down her plane with SA-7 shoulder-fired missiles as she was to land in Rome to meet the Pope. The Mossad, with only peripheral help from the chief of Italian counterintelligence, located the terrorists and nearly all of their missiles—including some sticking out from the top of a food-vendor's van. One Mossad car rammed the van, others careered outside the airport, four people were shot to death, and the Italian police never found out, thanks in part to the help of local Jews.

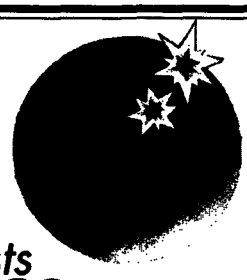
When the Italian magazine *Panorama* asked Ostrovsky to justify this "exaggerated" story that "resembles a novel" and that features an Italian official with a name—"Amburgo"—nonexistent in Italy (General Ambrogio Viviani denies any knowledge of the matter), Ostrovsky answered that he got the name out of the Mossad's computer, and that it is mangled because the computer files names according to a peculiar phonetic system geared to Arabic. One wonders whether the same computer also told him that SA-7 missiles can be fired vertically. Anyone in the least familiar with them knows that they must be kept pointed at the target.

THE story which has contributed most to the sales of this book is that the Mossad had learned about the plan to blow up the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in October 1983, but failed to tell the U.S. about it. Ostrovsky and Hoy claim that an agent who regularly reported on smuggling operations informed the Mossad that a Mercedes truck

> was being fitted by the Shiite Muslims with spaces that could hold bombs. He said that it had even larger than usual spaces for this, so that whatever it was destined for was going to be a major target. Now, the Mossad knew that, for size, there were only a few logical targets, one of which must be the U.S. compound.

The authors go on to charge that the director of the Mossad refused to tell the Americans about the truck, saying: "No, we're not going to protect the Americans. They're a big country. Send only the regular information"—meaning a warning that a vehicle bomb might be coming—"while all Israeli installations were . . . warned to watch for a truck matching the description of the Mercedes."

First, if there really was a report at all (and Ostrovsky gives no details as to the source), there would



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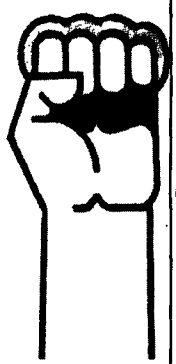

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have been no special reason to associate the truck with bombing rather than with smuggling. Second, Ostrovsky could not have known what the director of the Mossad did or did not do with an item of information. Third, there is no evidence that the Israelis then in Lebanon were themselves on the lookout for this particular truck. Fourth, Mercedes is the most common brand of truck on the streets of Beirut, so a warning to "watch out for a Mercedes truck bomb" would have been worth as much as the message that Ostrovsky says that the Mossad did send—watch out for a truck bomb.

Yet all of this is beside the point. The biggest warning had been delivered in April, when a similar bomb hit the U.S. embassy. Bombs in Beirut are to be expected as much as rain in Seattle in January. Without warning of time and place—which Ostrovsky does not claim the Mossad could have given—there are still countermeasures the U.S. Marines could have taken, such as building serious roadblocks defended by .50 caliber machine guns; these would have stopped any truck, Mercedes or not. But the U.S. commanders, like people who go to Seattle in January without an umbrella, did not take the proper precautions. That, not the Mossad, was the cause of the disaster. In sum, the book's most clamorous charge is an unsupported allegation that a report was not passed which, had it been passed, would surely not have been useful.

Ostrovsky's second-most clamorous charge is of the same kind: that the Mossad knew where, in Beirut, American hostages were being held, but defied the Israeli Prime Minister's own directive to cooperate fully with the U.S. in finding them. According to Ostrovsky, the then director, Nahum Admony, said that "he had no intention of helping them," and that—in part because his (alleged) mistress was having her period, and in part because of just plain Israeli meanness—his decision, "only slightly exaggerated" by the time the rumors about it reached the Mossad cafeteria, was: "Those fucking Americans. Maybe they want us to get the hostages for them too. What, are they crazy?" So the Mossad lied to the Americans, and did not even let them see the face of one of its *katsas*, or case officers. Ostrovsky says, paraphrasing the Book of Exodus, that the Mossad's policy in this regard amounts to something like, "Thou shalt not see the face of a *katsa* and live." This is blatant nonsense. CIA liaison people, and lots of other Americans, have met Mossad case officers regularly. More to the point, nobody in the CIA ever complained about receiving less than the fullest cooperation in finding the hostages. Unfortunately, the information always pointed to this block or that end of the street; this would have been good enough if Beirut had been in friendly hands, but Beirut was not in friendly hands. In sum, the charge consists of one supposition laid on another, laced with anonymous cafeteria talk, and based on patent untruths.

Ostrovsky is obviously ignorant concerning matters of intelligence. He expressess boredom with those parts of his training course that dealt with recognition of enemy military equipment, and writes of the 1981 Israeli attack on Iraq's nuclear reactor as if U.S. satellite photography had played no role in the determination of its function, state of completion, vulnerability, or precise location. He grossly underestimates the number of case officers the Mossad deploys in the world. He asserts that the Mossad prepares intelligence analyses for the Israeli government, whereas only military intelligence does that. He berates the Mossad for inflicting "pain and misery on others," while citing things like the recruitment of a Saudi attaché in Japan. Perhaps a half-dozen death warrants may have been signed as a consequence of this book. To what good has Ostrovsky sacrificed these lives? One doubts that he gave it a thought.

By Way of Deception is the sort of exercise—conspiracy theory incoherently expressed—that usually causes sophisticated people to turn away in disgust. Yet it is referred to in the press in hushed tones of respect. That can only be because it is now chic to think of Israel as evil. Insufficient in so many ways, Ostrovsky nonetheless has shown himself a shrewd judge of the people whose money he is taking.

Analysand's Revenge

Final Analysis: The Making and Unmaking of a Psychoanalyst. By Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson. *Addison-Wesley. 256 pp. $19.95*

Reviewed by Joseph Adelson

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson has lived much of his adult life in the spotlight, enmeshed in controversy. He is an erstwhile professor of Sanskrit who became a psychoanalyst, and who shortly thereafter caught the eye of Kurt Eissler, a man deeply learned in and devoted to the psychoanalytic movement and its history. Eissler was taken by him—taken in, many say—and saw to it that Masson was appointed to succeed him in directing the Freud Archives, the ultimate repository of Freudian documents. Masson, naturally enough, jumped at the chance, severed his academic ties, and set about his new work energetically. A certain brashness seems to have irritated many of those in the movement. But more serious problems emerged when his study of some early correspondence convinced him that Freud had deliberately concealed important findings, to the effect that many of his early patients had been sexually seduced as children, and that their "fantasies" of such had not been fantasies at all. In Masson's view, furthermore, Freud had carried out this deception in order to curry favor with respectable opinion.

Masson felt he had made a great discovery and was determined to publicize it. He agreed to (or arranged for) an interview with the New York *Times*, where his provocative conclusions were reported in a lengthy two-part story. Needless to say, that did not sit well with the elders of psychoanalysis. They

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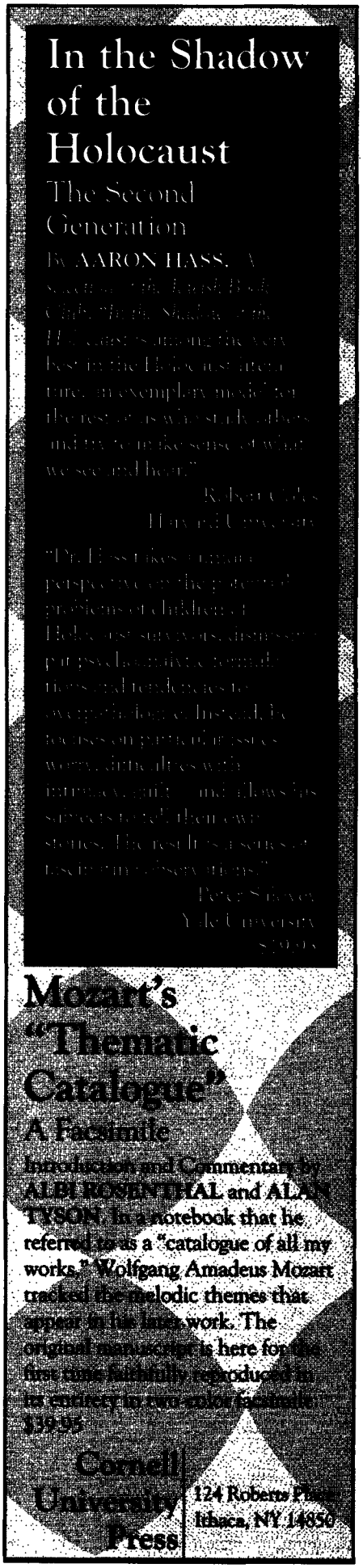
did not accept Masson's "evidence" or his interpretation of it, and they were especially indignant at his rushing to the newspapers. They discharged him as director of the archives. Ordinarily that would be that, a tempest in a teapot, of little interest to anyone except those absorbed in Freudian arcana. But then Janet Malcolm, a *New Yorker* critic who had earlier written an excellent book on the psychoanalytic profession, heard about what had happened, saw its journalistic possibilities, interviewed Masson and many others, and wrote a cool, clever account of the episode, initially for the magazine and later as a book. It made Masson a household name among those interested in psychoanalysis and its gossip and at the same time it demolished whatever reputation he might have aspired to. To most readers he came across as vain, opportunistic, self-seeking, boastful—a hustler, a Donald Trump of the psychoanalytic scene. Masson then sued Malcolm, claiming she had maligned him by various forms of misquotation. She replied that she might have condensed and paraphrased but had captured his meanings accurately. The first rulings were in her favor, but the case has now been accepted for hearing by the Supreme Court.

So the story continues, and there are moments when we feel it may never end. Whenever and however it ends, it is an amazing story, filled with improbabilities—that a fledgling professor of an ancient language would be given psychoanalytic training (and at a time when most analytic institutes had a nearly hysterical only-real-doctors-need-apply policy); that someone so young and unseasoned would prove so compelling to the otherwise cautious Eissler; that Masson would so rashly commit the very act sure to ruin his new career. It is an Icarus-like rise and fall which itself cries out for a psychoanalytic explanation, whether that be Oedipal rivalry, or being "wrecked by success," or sociopathic recklessness, or all of the above.

Masson has now chosen to write about these events, and one begins the book half-expecting it to be given over to his justifying himself, which he does, and to getting even, which he also does, though not against Janet Malcolm and her book, which go unmentioned, perhaps because of the ongoing litigation. Instead he gets even with just about everyone else—his training analyst, most of his supervisory analysts, most of his fellow students, all of the analysts who do not believe him about Freud's alleged deceits, all of the analysts who did not admire him for whatever reason. We are offered the inside dope on how analytic candidates are chosen and trained, and on the power politics within the institutes. The characters depicted are largely unpleasant or worse, often underhanded, driven by power and envy, vying with their peers for status, and petty tyrants toward those beneath them. Some are said to sleep with their patients. Some show clear signs of severe personality disorder, so volatile and erratic is their behavior—the worst case here being Masson's own analyst.

ALL in all, we have here one more example of what is now a familiar genre, the insider's story of sleazy doings behind the scenes—as in the chicanery of investment bankers, or the drugs and groupies of rock stars, and so on. Yet this report is more shocking, and is meant to be. We are not too surprised to learn that some financiers are greedy and rock stars addicted; it is another matter to be told of such personal nastiness among psychoanalysts who have, after all, been *analyzed*, deeply, to the very roots of being, and hence are supposed to be free of such startling imperfections. Yet if we are to believe Masson, we find behind those drawn curtains little else but imperfection. If we are to believe him, we should not even think about undertaking psychoanalytic therapy, or any therapy at all, so hazardous is it to one's well-being.

But can we believe him? Since we have only his own account of events and personalities, we rely largely on how we judge his motives and character. Even if we begin by leaning over backward in his favor, as I did, we are quickly put off by the venom expressed toward almost everyone he deals with, and



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by the utter absence of self-doubt or even self-reflection. It is a tale, told by a *faux-naif*, of innocence betrayed. Masson sought the truth courageously and discovered it, only to be done in by complacent or corrupted elders determined to keep the sordid secrets hidden. It is the story of his life: he finds a hero, idealizes him, then learns the terrible truth, and is forced to expose him and uncover the falsehoods he once believed in. His childhood hero was the mystic Paul Brunton, whose fraudulence he discovered while in college. The pattern recurs with his own analyst, first idealized, later despised; then Freud; ultimately Eissler. It is a simple, powerful Oedipal passion, which Masson does not quite grasp, despite those hundreds of hours on the couch.

Which leads us to the question of how he was able to withstand the close analytic scrutiny he was exposed to, passing through all those screens designed to detect the very questionable traits which will seem suspect even to the casual reader. It is not that difficult. Psychoanalysts are not necessarily good judges of character; having a keen sense of unconscious dynamics need not correlate with the kind of intelligence—the everyday street-smarts—which allows one to size up others accurately. Freud himself is a good example, time and again making terrible mistakes about other people, his utter failure to understand Jung—also an adventurer, by the way—being representative. Bear in mind, too, that Masson by his own account is a Don Juan, a relentless seducer, hence most likely someone able to read others accurately, talented in ingratiation, knowing intuitively when and how to say just what the target wants to hear. Listen to how he wooed and won Eissler:

> In many ways it was an unexpected friendship. Eissler was much older, and seemed to be everything I was not, conservative in his dress, brusque and apparently unfriendly in manner, spare in speech. *But what Eissler and I experienced together was, while completely nonsexual, nonetheless romantic in some important sense of this word. For one, it was shot through with fantasy. For another, we both behaved as if we were somehow infatuated, both intellectually and emotionally* [emphasis added, of course].

But others are not so easily seduced—among them journalists who, though they have other blind spots, are accustomed to seductions, dealing as they do routinely with people selling their stories. Since we can only imagine what happened, let us imagine it. Having earlier charmed the New York *Times*, Masson sees before him an even more glamorous opportunity, in the person of a writer for the *New Yorker*, willing to listen with rapt attention. He holds forth expansively, for forty hours, spurred on by what seems to be her total fascination, and what instead turns out to be the cat gazing carefully at the canary.

Masson's need to dramatize himself has kept him from writing the book that needs to be written. He is right about a number of things, above all the unrecognized problems psychoanalysis has in choosing and educating its candidates. A tremendous fuss is made about the exquisite care that goes into selection, but what comes out, though often puffed up about itself, is really quite ordinary. Training itself is a war of attrition: ten years in a sweatbox playing dumb, as an analyst once put it to me in an unguarded moment. Those who survive are far too often the merely compliant. Despite its worldly success, psychoanalysis on this continent has been lackluster intellectually: almost all of the new ideas since Freud's death have been produced by émigré Europeans and by the English.

It would be good to have a searching discussion of these and many other problems psychoanalysis confronts, but we do not get it here. Masson is just not a serious thinker. He is portentous but not serious. His disappointments, entirely self-created in my view, have led him to disparage not only psychoanalysis, but all psychotherapy, and for the tackiest of leftist reasons—that it is "hierarchical." Other clichés follow. Psychoanalysis is "ethnocentric." It "blames the victim." And of course it has terrible attitudes about women—Masson as feminist living quite comfortably with Masson as womanizer.

At the end all he can offer are soulful banalities. The last paragraph of the book tells us that the truth about one's self can be attained only

> through living. There are no experts in loving, no scholars of living, no doctors of the human emotions and no gurus of the soul. But we need not be alone; friendship is a precious gift, and all we need do to see is remove the blinders.

As my grandmother used to say, "All that education and that's what you learned?"

Election '88

PLEDGING ALLEGIANCE: THE LAST CAMPAIGN OF THE COLD WAR. BY SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL. *Harper & Row. 374 pp. $22.50.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL NOVAK

When Sidney Blumenthal first came to notice as a writer he was at the further edges of the Left, the co-editor of a conspiracy book about, among other things, Kennedy and King assassination plots (*Government by Gunplay*, 1976), and a contributor to an "alternative paper" in Boston. His career has ever since been marked by a crabwise move toward respectability: from the *Progressive* and the *Nation* and *In These Times* to the Washington *Post*, where he took on the beat of policing neoconservatives, and the *New Republic*. His last book, *The Rise of the Counter-Establishment*, a projection of his fears of neoconservatives, has led naturally to the present account of the election of 1988, presented as if in the conventional manner pioneered by Theodore White.

Unlike White, however, Blum-

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enthal is unwilling to be mainly a reporter; it is important for him to have an ideological theory about the elections—and, moreover, a theory set against a cosmic background. Blumenthal's thesis is that the cold war has corrupted and poisoned American life since 1948—so much so that in the election of 1988, both Democrats and Republicans, their minds locked in habits instilled by the East-West conflict, failed utterly to notice that a great figure, Mikhail Gorbachev, had created an entirely new historical reality.

The design of Blumenthal's book is straightforward. Two chapters sketch the cosmic background, introduce the chief protagonists, and set the plot in motion. A chapter at the end emphasizes the ideological conclusion. In between come eleven more or less descriptive chapters on all eleven presidential candidates and the highlights of their campaigns. Since few contests in history have been so thoroughly covered as the 1988 presidential campaign—cable television, in particular, multiplied by many times over the hours of footage that political junkies could watch—Blumenthal is unable to produce much new information. Who could? But recalling the blow-by-blow does offer some pleasures.

For me, the most interesting parts are the treatments of Gary Hart, Jesse Jackson, and Michael Dukakis. In this book Blumenthal takes a greater distance from Hart than he did in 1984, when he was simultaneously contributing to speeches for Hart and publishing political columns that praised Hart's campaign. But he still sees Hart as a bearer of forces much greater than himself: the tide of ideas, a new generation, a new correlation of powers. (It is characteristic of Blumenthal that he is always looking for metaphysical forces that carry individuals along like bits of wood on the ocean.) As for Jesse Jackson, Blumenthal's treatment of him is surprisingly critical, even mocking. He makes fun of Jackson's penchant for publicity, and his lack of systematic knowledge:

> On Jackson's map of the world, the Soviet Union was a large blank space. His understanding was at best rudimentary. For all his global talk, he simply failed to account for the Soviet Union. Was it a new nation that was a model for and backer of the masses of the third world? Or was it part of the exploiting West? Was it a superpower exactly like the U.S.? Where did Russian nationalism, which is strongly anti-Western, fit in? What of pan-Slavism and the problem of Central Europe? What of the nationalities within the Soviet Union? . . . Jackson never addressed any of these questions, or any like them.

Concerning the hapless Dukakis, Blumenthal is far more contemptuous, even withering, than ever was George Bush, whom Blumenthal nevertheless continually accuses of "negative campaigning."

But in the end none of the American presidential candidates, Bush included, matters all that much in Blumenthal's vision, which is dominated first and foremost by the figure of Mikhail Gorbachev. Blumenthal, indeed, pictures Mikhail Gorbachev as having been totally in control of Ronald Reagan, ever since they met for the first time in Geneva in 1985. Thereafter, Gorbachev conceived of a new "starring role" for the uncomprehending Reagan, "wrote a script" for it, "produced" the drama of the end of the cold war, and in general became Reagan's "handler" and "rescuer." In so doing, Gorbachev "helped save the Reagan presidency, thereby indirectly fostering the environment for Bush's election" in 1988. A year later, "Gorbachev's decision to abet the overthrow of the Stalinist regimes of Central Europe then helped raise Bush to the heights of popularity." (Blumenthal plainly does not see these matters through the eyes of Eastern Europeans, whose admiration of, and gratitude toward, Ronald Reagan is immense, and whose measured dismissal of Gorbachev is quite stunning.)

To Blumenthal, however, the benefit of Gorbachev to American politics does not stop with Reagan and Bush. Far from it: the real accomplishment of this "unintended agent of change" has been something much different and much greater, namely, "creating the preconditions for the revival of liberalism." This, indeed, is the final lesson that Blumenthal derives from the campaign of 1988. Despite a penultimate chapter entitled "The Dead Democrats," Blumenthal foresees not the death but the resurrection of the Democratic party as a result of the end of the cold war.

He may be right, of course. But somehow, I doubt it because, if Blumenthal is an example, the Left has become what the Right was once accused of being—"the stupid party," listening to nothing, learning nothing.

For one thing, Blumenthal has by no means glimpsed the many reasons why Americans still do not trust the Left. His own descriptions of the disarray within the Democratic party, devastating as they are, miss the point. Although in some ways the Democrats are the second most capitalist party in the world, their ideological leadership has been seized by a "new class" whose vision is incoherent and leads toward political self-destruction.

The fundamental incoherence is this. The new class has an ideological compulsion to identify itself with the workers and the poor, on whose needy condition it depends for its own sense of moral righteousness. But emotionally, the new class is radically opposed to the symbols, values, and moral principles by which the working class lives and moves. This incoherence is apparent in Blumenthal's handling of the campaign incident from which his book takes its title.

In Massachusetts, the new class was embodied in the teachers' unions, the suburban liberals, the Kennedy School, the Boston *Globe*, the Massachusetts Supreme Court, and Governor Michael Dukakis, and it was solidly opposed to the regular recitation of the pledge of allegiance in the state's classrooms. Ironically, this same new class had as its battlecry for the 1988 election "community" and "communitarian values"—a community, apparently, incompatible with a pledge to the republic for which the flag stands. In any case, the people wanted the pledge and the new class did not. Dukakis sided with

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the new class and lost; Bush had the wit (which he has not always shown) to side with the people.

A SECOND incoherence concerns matters of race. The new class aims (it says) at racial equality, but its methods, its rhetoric, and its favorite symbolic images stress the inequality of the races and the need for double standards. In these respects, the new class seems to have given up on equality and individual merit, and to have invented a new form of racism—liberal racism. The iconography of the new class ignores the diligent, successful black male—an assistant manager at IBM, or a systems engineer at TRW—and treats him with faint disgust as an "oreo," black on the outside but living by contemptible white bourgeois values, and unfaithful to his race. By contrast, the jobless, hostile, fist-clenching, unsocialized mugger is accepted lovingly by the new class as the authentic voice of the ghetto. The black hero to whom the new class extends its sympathy, its counseling, and its privileges is—Willie Horton.

For Sidney Blumenthal, of course, "Even Willie Horton was about the cold war." For Blumenthal, *everything* is about the cold war (except the cold war itself, in his eyes nothing but a fantasy). Nonetheless, he is right about an underlying analogy. In dealing with criminals like Willie Horton, the new class prefers appeasement, aid, negotiations—furloughs. It is the working class, not restrained by prohibitions against common sense, that prefers deterrence. Deterrence is race-neutral; it is rooted in a vision of good and evil. As long as presidential elections are, or can be turned into, referenda on the new class and its peculiar social morality, it is not easy to see how a Democrat can win.

Blumenthal also cannot understand the penetrating, myth-shattering effectiveness of President Reagan's deliberate public assertion in 1983 that the Soviet Union was an "evil empire," "the focus of evil" in our time; it is an assertion Blumenthal disdains as silly. But in the end, even Gorbachev had to say that the Soviet past was "marked by Stalinist criminality, enormous and unforgivable." Indeed, Blumenthal himself obliquely concedes Reagan's point, for by his own testimony the one great change in the world in the 1980's occurred in the USSR, and that single change made the world a much more hopeful place.

FINALLY, Blumenthal's failure to grasp the evils of Communism and the crucial importance of resisting such evil early and, if necessary, with military force, bodes ill for the international vision of the Democratic party of his dreams. His dismissal of the cold war as fantasy is a sacrilege upon the graves of the millions who perished in the gulags and detention centers of Communism from Prague to Hanoi. And it is also an insult to the modern leaders of the Democratic party, from Harry S. Truman through Hubert Humphrey, John F. Kennedy, and Henry Jackson who, when so many Republicans were still isolationists, inspired the people of this nation to endure forty long years of heavy expenditures (and the sacrifice of many young lives) until the magnificent counterrevolutions of 1989 brought sudden victory. Vaclav Havel, Lech Walesa, and many other leaders of the newly liberated peoples have offered the thanks to America that Blumenthal cannot bring himself to utter.

The moral issue underlying the cold war—the struggle for peace through strength—will not disappear from history with the perishing of the cold war itself. Even while Blumenthal's book was on press, the face of evil once more rose into view in the murderous person of Saddam Hussein. On the domestic front, the great values of the American people, and especially working-class Democrats, still cluster around the themes of work, family, and neighborhood—issues to which Blumenthal seems tone-deaf. It would be ironic indeed if the Democrats were now to become the party of class warfare, envy, and the "new soft tyranny" of the thoroughly administrative state, just as socialist economics is becoming a term of derision in the East. Given Republican incompetence, anything can happen, but if the Democratic party intends to win the presidency, it will not be by way of the values and ideas to which the likes of Sidney Blumenthal pledge their allegiance.

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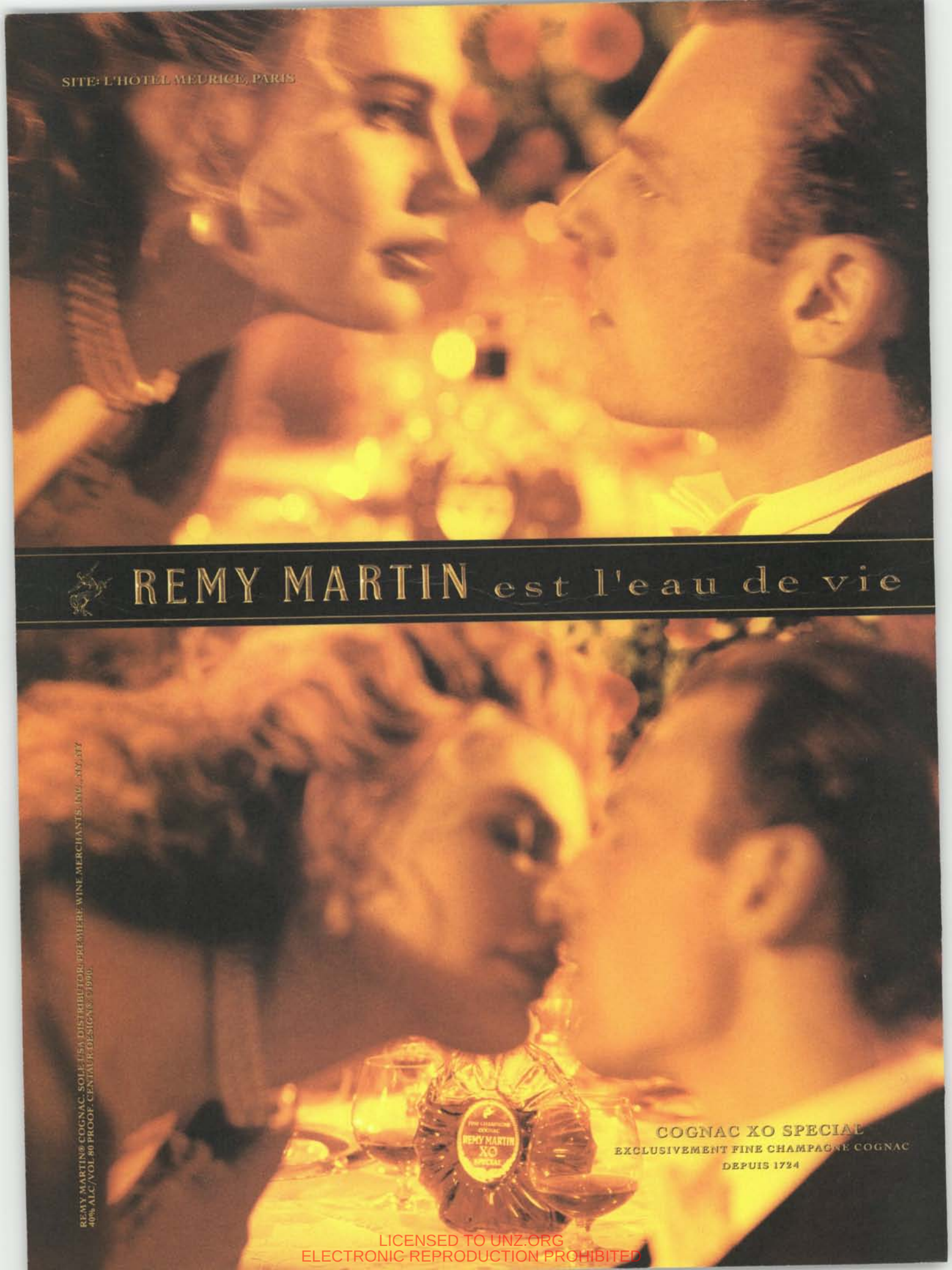
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